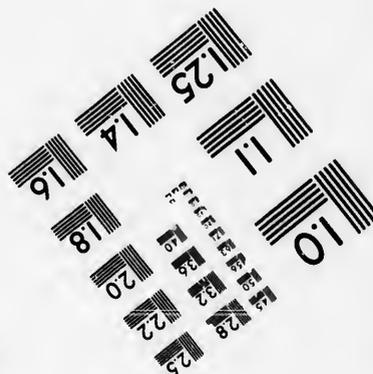
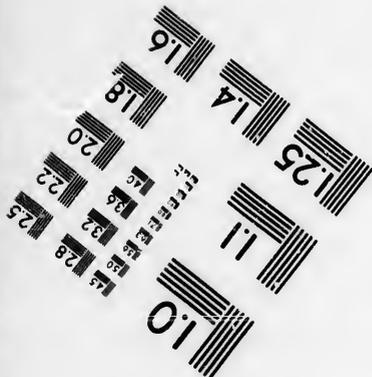
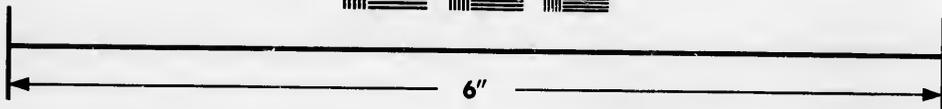
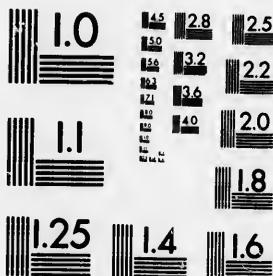


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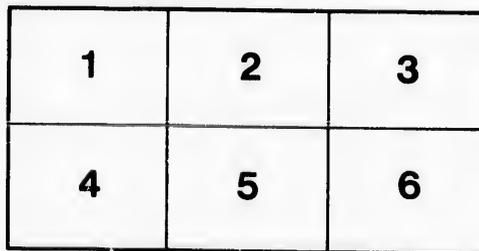
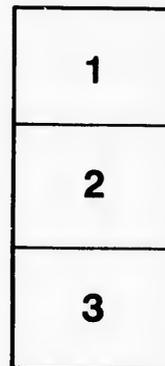
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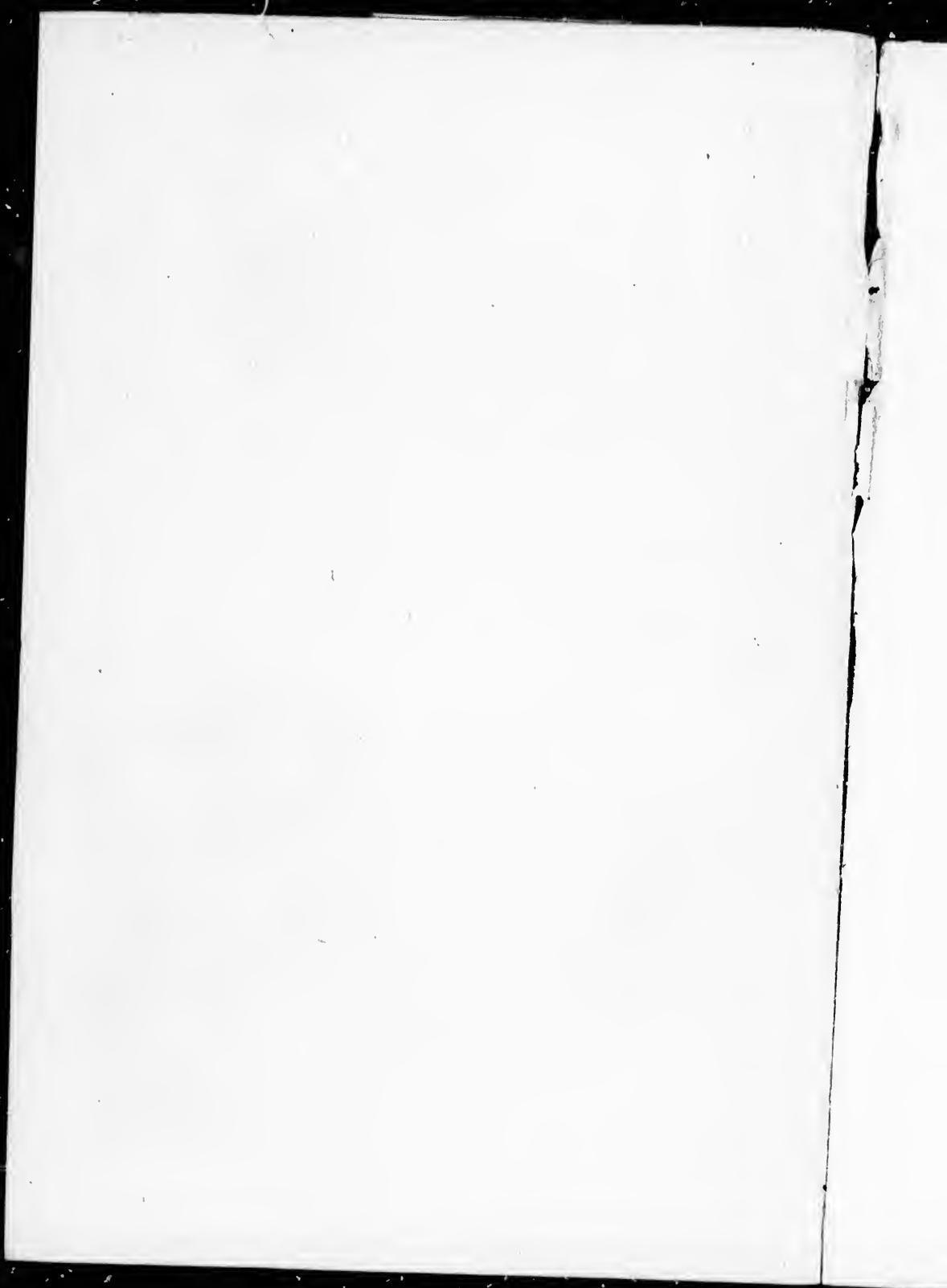
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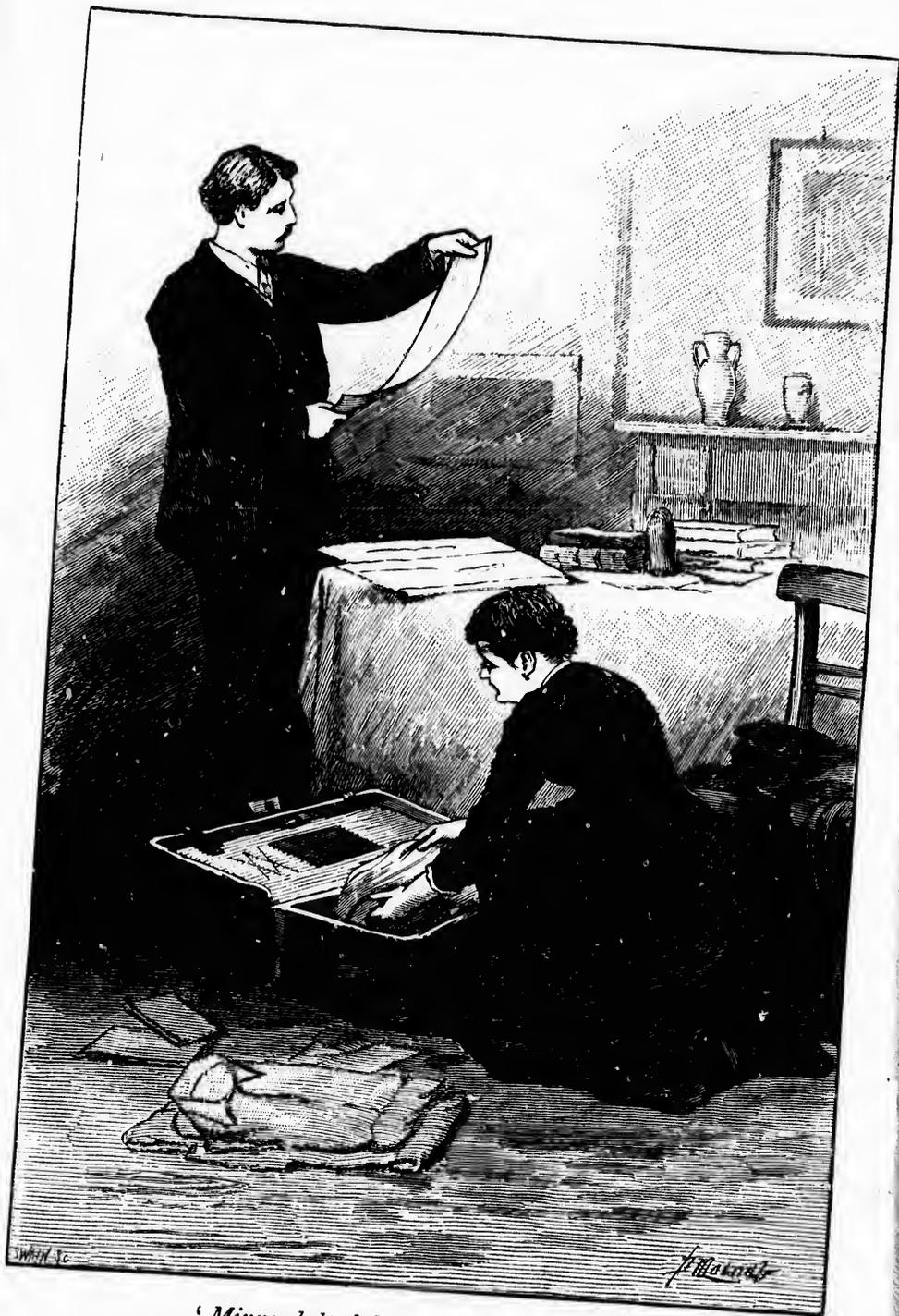
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CONTENTS

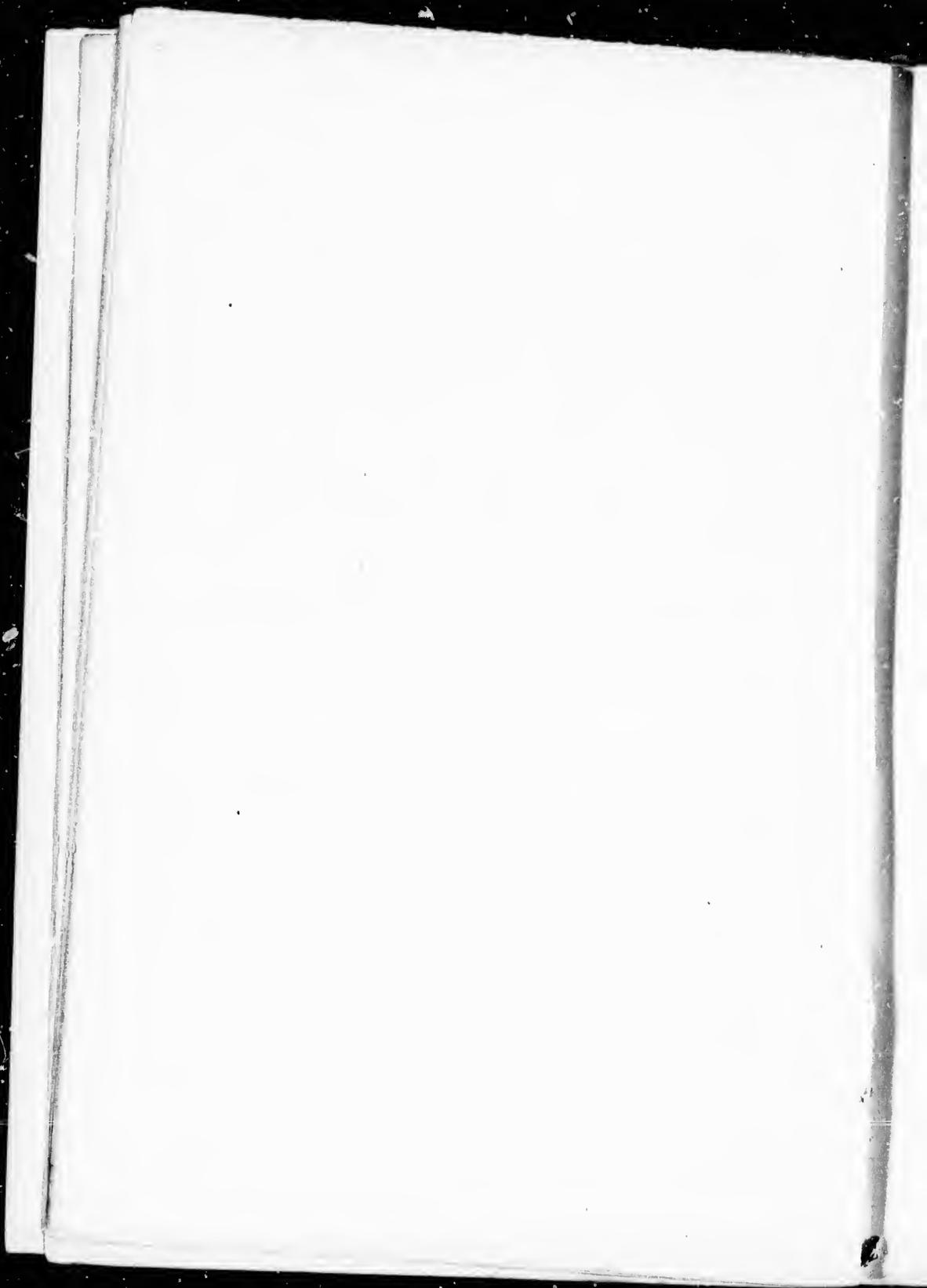
OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER	PAGE
XV. A DOOR OPENS	1
XVI. COLIN'S DEPARTURE	27
XVII. A LITTLE CLOUD LIKE A MAN'S HAND	40
XVIII. HIRAM IN WONDERLAND	71
XIX. UNWARRANTABLE INTRUSION	93
XX. THE STRANDS CONVERGE	122
XXI. COLIN SETTLES HIMSELF	138
XXII. HIRAM GETS SETTLED	151
XXIII. RECOGNITION	165
XXIV. GWEN AND HIRAM	190
XXV. MINNA BETTERS HERSELF	221
XXVI. BREAKING UP	257
XXVII. THE DEACON MAKES A GOOD END	265
XXVIII. AN ART PATRON	283

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ILLUSTRATIONS
TO
THE SECOND VOLUME.

' MINNA HELPED HIM TO CHOOSE AND PACK '	<i>Frontispiece</i>
' COLIN STOOD STILL FOR A MOMENT AWE-STRUCK '	<i>To face p. 140</i>
' COLIN TOOK HER HAND '	„ 206
' I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOUR FEELINGS '	„ 228

48

B A B Y L O N

CHAPTER XV.

A DOOR OPENS

ANOTHER year had passed, and Colin, now of full age, had tired of working for Cicolari. It was all very well, this moulding clay and carving replicas of afflicted widows; it was all very well, this modelling busts and statuettes and little classical compositions; it was all very well, this picking up stray hints in a half-amateur fashion from the grand torsos of the British Museum and a few scattered Thorwaldsens or antiques of the great country houses; but Colin Churchill felt in his

heart of hearts that all that was not sculpture. He was growing in years now, and instead of learning he was really working. Still, he had quite made up his mind that some day or other he should look with his own eyes on the glories of the Vatican and the Villa Albani. Nay, he had even begun to take lessons in Italian from Cicolari—counting his chickens before they were hatched, Minna said—so that he might not feel himself at a loss whenever the great and final day of his redemption should happen to arrive. The dream of his life was to go to Rome, and study in a real studio, and become a regular genuine sculptor. Nothing short of that would ever satisfy him, he told Minna: and Minna, though she trembled to think of Colin's going so far away from her—among all those black-eyed Italian women, too—(and Colin had often told her he admired black eyes, like hers, above all others)—poor

little Minna could not but admit sorrowfully to herself that Rome was after all the proper school for Colin Churchill. 'The capital of art,' he repeated to her, over and over again; must it not be the right place for him, who she felt sure was going to be the greatest of all modern English artists?

But how was Colin ever to get there? Going to Rome costs money; and during all these years Colin had barely been able to save enough to buy the necessary books and materials for his self-education. The more deeply he felt the desire to go, the more utterly remote did the chance of going seem to become to him. 'And yet I shall go, Minna,' he said to her almost fiercely one September evening. 'Go to Rome I will, if I have to tramp every step of the way on foot, and reach there barefoot.'

Minna sighed and the tears came into her eyes; but strong in her faith and pride in

Colin, strong in her eager desire that Colin should give free play to his own genius, she answered firmly with a little quiver of her lips, 'You ought to go, Colin; and if you think it'd help you, you might take all that's left of my savings, and I'd go back again willingly to the parlour-maiding.'

Colin looked at the pretty little pupil-teacher with a look of profound and unfeigned admiration. 'Minna,' he said, 'dear little woman, you're the best and kindest-hearted girl that ever breathed; but how on earth do you suppose I could possibly be wretch enough to take away your poor little savings? No, no, little woman, you must keep them for yourself, and use them for making yourself—I was going to say into a lady—but you couldn't do that, Minna, you couldn't do that, for you were born one already. Still, if *you* want *me* to be a real sculptor, *I* want *you*, little woman, just as much to be a real

educated gentlewoman.' Colin said the last word with a certain lingering loving cadence, for it had a good old-fashioned ring about it that recommended it well to his simple straightforward peasant nature.

'Well, Colin,' Minna went on, blushing a bit (for that last quiet hint seemed half unintentionally to convey the impression that Colin really possessed a proprietary right in her whole future), 'we must try our best to find out some way for you to go to Rome at last in spite of everything. You know, meanwhile, you've got good employment, Colin, and that's always something.'

'Ah yes, Minna,' Colin answered with his youthful enthusiasm coming strong upon him, 'I've got employment, of course; but I don't want employment; I want opportunities, I want advice, I want instruction, I want the means of learning, I want to perfect myself. Here in London, somehow, I feel as if I was

tied down by the leg, and panting to get loose again. I like Cicolari, and in my own native untaught fashion I've done my best to improve myself with him; but I feel sadly the lack of training and competition. I should like to see how other men do their work; I should like to pit myself against them and find out whether I really am or am not a sculptor. Let me but just go to Rome, and I shall mould such things and carve such statues—ah, Minna, you shall see them! And the one delight I have in life now, Minna, is to get out like this, and talk it over with you, and tell you what I mean to do when once I get at it. For you can sympathise with me more than any of them, little woman. I feel that you can realise my longing to do good work—the work I know I'm fitted for—a thousand times better than a mere decent respectable marble-hacking workman like Cicolari.'

Poor little Minna! She sighed again, and her heart beat harder than ever. It was such a privilege for her to feel that Colin Churchill, with all that great future looming large before his young imagination, still loved her best to sympathise with him in his artistic yearnings. She pressed his arm a little, in her sweet simplicity, but she said nothing

‘You see,’ Colin went on, musingly, for he liked to talk it all over again and again with Minna, ‘art doesn’t all come by nature, Minna, as most people fancy; it wants such a lot of teaching. Of course, you’ve got to have the thing born in you to begin with; but you might be born a Pheidias, it’s my belief, Minna, and yet, without teaching, the merest wooden blockhead at the Academy schools would beat you hollow as far as technicalities went. Look at the dissecting now! If I hadn’t saved that five pounds that Sir William gave me for carving the group on the mantelpiece,

I should never have known anything at all about anatomy. But just going in my spare time for those six months to the anatomy class at the University College Hospital—why, it gave me quite a different idea altogether about the human figure. It showed me how to clothe my bare skeletons, Minna.'

'I never could bear your going and doing that horrible dissection, all the same, Colin,' Minna said with a chilly little shudder. 'It's so dreadful, you know, cutting up dead bodies and all that—just as bad as if you were going to be a medical student.'

'Ah, but no sculpture worth calling sculpture's possible without it, I tell you, Minna,' Colin answered warmly. 'Why, Michael Angelo, you know—Michael Angelo was a regular downright out-and-out anatomist. It can't be wrong to do like Michael Angelo, now can it? That was a man, Michael Angelo! And Leonardo, too, he was an awful stickler

for anatomy as well, Leonardo was. Why, every great sculptor and every great painter that ever I've read of, Minna, had to study anatomy. I suppose the Greeks did it, even; yes, I'm sure the Greeks did it, for just look at the legs of the Discobolus and the arms of the Theseus; how the muscles in them show the knowledge of anatomy in the old sculptors. Oh yes, Minna, I'm quite sure the Greeks did it. And the Greeks! well, the Greeks, you know, they were really even greater, I do believe, than Michael Angelo.'

'Well, Colin,' Minna answered, with the charming critical confidence of love and youth and inexperience, 'I've seen all your engravings of images by Michael Angelo, and I've seen the broken-nosed Theseus, don't you call him, at the Museum, and I've seen all the things you've sent me to look at in the South Kensington; and it's my belief, Rome or no Rome, that there isn't one of them fit to hold

a candle any day to your Cephalus and Aurora, that you made when you first came to London; and I should say so if the whole Royal Academy was to come up in a lump and declare your figures weren't worth anything.'

A week or two passed, and Minna, busy at staid Miss Woollacott's with her little pupils, saw no more chance than ever, though she turned it over often in her mind, of helping Colin on his way to Rome. Indeed, the North London Birkbeck Girls' School was hardly the place where one might naturally expect to find opportunities arise of such a nature. But one morning, in the teachers' room, Minna happened to pick up the 'Times,' which lay upon the table, and, looking over it, her eye fell casually upon an advertisement which at first sight would hardly have attracted her attention at all, but for the word **ROME** printed in it in small capitals. It

was merely one of the ordinary servants' advertisements, lumped together promiscuously under the head of Wanted.

'AS VALET, to go abroad (to ROME), a young man, not exceeding 30. Good wages. Some knowledge of Italian would be a recommendation. Apply to Sir Henry Wilberforce, 27 Ockenden Square, S.W.'

Minna laid down the paper with a sickening feeling at her heart : she thought she saw in it just a vague chance by which Colin could manage to get to Rome and begin his education as a sculptor. After all, it was the getting there that was the great difficulty. Colin had ten or eleven pounds put away, she knew, and though that would barely suffice to pay the railway fare on the humblest scale, yet it would be quite a little fortune to go on upon when once he got there. Minna knew from her own experience how far ten pounds will go for a careful person with due economy. Now, if only Colin would consent to take this place as valet—and Minna knew that he had

long ago learnt a valet's duties at the old vicar's—he might get his passage paid to Rome for him, and whenever this Sir Henry Wilberforce got tired of him, or was coming away, or other reasonable cause occurred, Colin might leave the place and employ all his little savings in getting himself some scraps of a sculptor's education at Rome. Wild as all this would seem to most people who are accustomed to count money in terms of hundreds, it didn't sound at all wild to poor little Minna, and it wouldn't have sounded so to Colin Churchill.

But should she tell Colin anything about it? Could she bear to tell him? Let him go away from her across the sea to that dim far Italy of his own accord, if he liked; it was his fortune, his chance in life, his natural place; she knew it; but why should she, Minna Wroe, the London pupil-teacher, the Wootton fisherman's daughter—why should

she go out of her way to send him so far from her, to banish herself from his presence, to run the risk of finally losing him altogether? 'After all,' she thought, 'perhaps I oughtn't to tell him. He might be angry at it. He might think I shouldn't have looked upon such a place as at all good enough for him. He's a sculptor; not a servant; and I got to be a schoolmistress myself on purpose so as to make myself something like equal to him. It wouldn't be right of me to go proposing to him that he should take now to brushing coats and laying out shirt studs again, when he ought to be sculpturing a statue a great deal more beautiful than those great stupid, bloated, thick-legged Michael Angelos. I dare say the wisest thing for me to do would be to say nothing at all to him about it.'

'Miss Wroe,' a small red-haired pupil called out, popping her shock head through the half-open doorway, and shouting out her

message in her loudest London accent, 'if yer please, ye're ten minutes late for the fourth junerer, and Miss Woollacott, she says, will yer please come at once, and not keep the third junerer waitin' any longer.'

Minna ran off hurriedly to her class, and tried to forget her troubles about Colin forthwith in the occult mysteries of the agreement of a relative with its antecedent.

But when she got back to Miss Woollacott's lodgings at Kentish Town that evening, and had had her usual supper of bread and cheese and a glass of water—Miss Woollacott took beer, but Minna as a minor was restricted to the beverage of nature—and had heard prayers read, and had gone up by herself to her small bare bedroom, she sat down on the bedside all alone, and cried a little, and thought it all out, and tried hard to come to the right decision. It would be very sad indeed to lose Colin; she could scarcely bear

that ; and yet she knew that it was for Colin's good ; and what was for Colin's good was surely for her own good too in the long-run. Well, was it? that was the question. Of course, she would dearly love for Colin to go to Rome, and learn to be a real sculptor, and get fame and glory, and come back a greater man than the vicar himself—almost as great, indeed, as the Earl of Beaminster. But there were dangers in it, too. Out of sight, out of mind ; and it was a long way to Italy. Perhaps when Colin got there he would see some pretty Italian girl or some grand fine lady, and fall in love with her, and forget at once all about his poor little Minna. Ah, no, it wasn't altogether for Minna's good, perhaps, that Colin should go to Italy.

She sat there so long, ruminating about it on her bedside without undressing, that Miss Woollacott, who always looked under the door to see if the light was out and prevent

waste of the candles, called out in quite a sharp voice, 'Minna Wroe, how very long you are undressing!' And then she blew out the candle in a hurry, and undressed in the dark, and jumped into bed hastily, and covered her head up with the bedclothes, and had a good cry, very silently; and after that she felt a little better. But still she couldn't go to sleep, thinking about how very hard it would be to lose Colin. Oh, no, she couldn't bear to tell him; she wouldn't tell him; it wasn't at all likely the place would suit him; and if he wanted to go to Rome and leave her, he must just go and find a way for himself; and so that was all about it.

And then a sudden glow of shame came over Minna's cheeks, as she lay there in the dark on the little iron bedstead, to think that she should have been so untrue for a single moment to her better self and to Colin's best and highest interests. She *loved* Colin! yes,

she *loved* him! from her childhood onward, he had been her one dream and romance and ideal! She knew Colin could make things lovelier than any other man on earth had ever yet imagined; and she knew she ought to do her best to put him in the way of fulfilling his own truest and purest instincts. Should she selfishly keep him here in England, when it was only at Rome that he could get the best instruction? Should she cramp his genius and clip his wings, merely in order that he mightn't fly away too far from her? Oh, it was wicked of her, downright wicked of her, to wish not to tell him. Come of it what might, she must go round and see Colin the very next day, and let him decide for himself about that dreadful upsetting advertisement. And having at last arrived at this conclusion, Minna covered her head a second time with the counterpane, had another good cry, just to relieve her conscience, and then sank off

into a troubled sleep from which she only woke again at the second bell next morning.

All that day she taugth with the dreadful advertisement weighing heavily on her mind, and interposing itself terribly between her and the rule of three, or the names and dates of the Anglo-Saxon sovereigns. She couldn't for the life of her remember whether Ethelbald came before or after Ethelwulf; and she stumbled horribly over the question whether *this* was a personal or a demonstrative pronoun. But when the evening came, she got leave from Miss Woollacott to go round and see her cousin (a designation which was strictly correct in some remote sense, for Minna's mother and Colin's father were in some way related), and she almost ran the whole way to the Marylebone Road to catch Colin just before he went away for the night from Cicolari's.

When Colin saw the advertisement, and

heard Minna's suggestion, he turned it over a good many times in his own mind, and seemed by no means disinclined to try the chances of it. 'It's only a very small chance, of course, Minna,' he said dubitatively, 'but at any rate it's worth trying. The great thing against me is that I haven't been anything in that line for so very long, and I can't get any character, except from Cicolari. The one thing in my favour is that I know a little Italian. I don't suppose there are many young men of the sort who go to be valets who know Italian. Anyhow, I'll try it. It'll be a dreadful thing if I get it, having to leave you for so long, Minna,' and Minna's cheek brightened at that passing recognition of her prescriptive claim upon him; 'but it'll only be for a year or two; and when I come back, little woman, I shall come back very different from what I go, and then, Minna—why, then, we shall see what we shall see!' And Colin

stooped to kiss the little ripe lips that pretended to evade him (Minna hadn't got over that point of etiquette yet), and held the small brown face tight between his hands, so that Minna couldn't manage to get it away, though she struggled, as in duty bound, her very hardest.

So early next day Colin put on his best Sunday clothes—and very handsome and gentlemanly he looked in them too—and walked off to Ockenden Square, S.W., in search of Sir Henry Wilberforce.

Sir Henry was a tall, spare, wizened-up old gentleman, with scanty grey hair, carefully brushed so as to cover the largest possible area with the thinnest possible layer. He was sitting in the dining-room after breakfast when Colin called; and Colin was shown in by the footman as an ordinary visitor. 'What name?' the man asked, as he ushered him from the front door.

‘Colin Churchill.’

‘Mr. Colin Churchill!’ the man said, as Colin walked into the dining-room.

Sir Henry stared and rose to greet him with hand extended. ‘Though upon my word,’ he thought to himself, ‘who the deuce Mr. Colin Churchill may be, I’m sure I haven’t the faintest conception.’

This was decidedly awkward. Colin felt hot and uncomfortable; it began to dawn upon him that in his best Sunday clothes he looked perhaps a trifle *too* gentlemanly. But he managed to keep at a respectful distance, and Sir Henry, not finding his visitor respond to the warmth of his proposed reception, dropped his hand quietly and waited for Colin to introduce his business.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ Colin said a little uncomfortably—he began to feel, now, how far he had left behind the Dook’s early lessons in manners—‘I—I’ve come about your ad-

vertisement for a valet. I—I've come, in fact, to apply for the situation.'

Sir Henry glanced at him curiously. 'The deuce you have,' he said, dropping back chillily into his easy chair, and surveying Colin over from head to foot with an icy scrutiny. 'You've come to apply for the situation! Why, Wilkinson said, "*Mr. Colin Churchill.*"'

'He mistook my business, I suppose,' Colin answered quietly, but with some hesitation. It somehow struck him already that he would find it hard to drop back once more into the long-forgotten position of a valet. 'I came to ask whether it was likely I would suit you. I can speak Italian.'

That was his trump card, in fact, and he thought it best to play it quickly.

Sir Henry looked at him again. 'Oh, you can speak Italian. Well, that's good as far as it goes; but how much Italian can you speak, that's the question?' And he added a few

words in the best Tuscan he could muster up, to test the applicant's exact acquirements.

Colin answered him more quickly and idiomatically than Sir Henry had expected. In fact, Cicolari's lessons had been sound and practical. Sir Henry kept up the conversation, still in Italian, for a few minutes, and then, being quite satisfied on that score, returned with a better grace to his native English. 'Have you been out as a valet before?' he asked.

'Not for some years, sir,' Colin replied frankly. 'I went out to service at first, and was page and valet to a clergyman in Dorsetshire—Mr. Howard-Russell, of Wootton Mandeville——'

'Knew him well,' Sir Henry repeated to himself reflectively. 'Old Howard-Russell of Wootton Mandeville! Dead these five years. Knew him well, the selfish old pig; as conceited, self-opinionated an old fool as ever lived in all England. He declared my un-

doubted Pinturicchio was only a Giovanni do Spagno. Whereas it's really the only quite indubitable Pinturicchio in a private gallery anywhere at all outside Italy.'

'Except the St. Sebastian at Knowle, of course,' Colin put in, innocently.

Sir Henry turned round and stared at him again. 'Except the St. Sebastian at Knowle,' he echoed coldly. 'Except the St. Sebastian at Knowle, no doubt. But how the deuce did he come to know the St. Sebastian at Knowle was a Pinturicchio, I wonder? Anyhow, it shows he's lived in very decent places. Well, and so you used to be with old Mr. Howard-Russell, did you? And since then—since then—what have you been doing?'

'At present, sir,' Colin went on, 'I'm working as a marble-cutter; but circumstances make me wish to go back again to service now, and as I happen to know Italian, I thought perhaps your place might suit me.'

‘No doubt, no doubt. I dare say it would. But the question is, would you suit *me*, don’t you see? A marble-cutter, he says—a marble-cutter! How deuced singular! Have you got a character?’

‘I could get one from Mr. Russell’s friends, I should think, sir; and of course my present employer would speak for my honesty and so forth.’

Sir Henry asked him a few more questions, and then seemed to be turning the matter over in his own mind a little. ‘The Italian,’ he said, speaking to himself—for he had a habit that way, ‘the Italian’s the great thing. I’ve made up my mind I’ll never go to Rome again with a valet who doesn’t speak Italian. Dobbs was impossible, quite impossible. This young man has some Italian, but can he valet, I wonder? Here, you! come into my bedroom, and let me see what you can do in the way of your duties.’

Colin followed him upstairs, and, being put through his paces as a body-servant, got through the examination with decent credit. Next came the question of wages and so forth, and finally the announcement that Sir Henry meant to start for Rome early in October. 'Well, he's a very fair-spoken young man,' Sir Henry said at last, 'and he knows Italian. But it's devilish odd his being a marble-cutter. However, I'll try him. I'll write to your master, Churchill—what's his name—I'll write to him and enquire about you.'

Colin gave him Cicolari's name and address, and Sir Henry noted them deliberately in his pocket-book. 'Very good,' he said; 'I'll write and ask about your character, and if everything's all correct, I shall let you know and engage you.'

Colin found it rather hard to answer 'Thank you, sir;' but it was for Rome and art, and he managed to say it.

CHAPTER XVI.

COLIN'S DEPARTURE.

WHEN Minna learnt from Colin that he had finally accepted Sir Henry Wilberforce's situation, her heart was very heavy. She wanted her old friend to do everything that would make him into a great sculptor, of course ; but still, say what you will about it, it's very hard to have your one interest in life taken far away from you, and to be left utterly alone and self-contained in the great dreary world of London. Have you ever reflected, dear sir or madam, how terrible is the isolation of a girl in Minna Wroe's position—nay, for the matter of that, of your own housemaid, of cook, or parlour-maid, in that vast,

unsympathetic, human ant-hill? Think, for a moment, of the warm human heart within her, suddenly cramped and turned in upon itself by the unspeakable strangeness of everything around her. She has come up from the country, doubtless, to take a 'better' place in London, and there she is thrown by pure chance into one situation or another, with two or three more miscellaneous girls from other shires, having other friends and other interests; and from day to day she toils on, practically alone, among so many unknown, or but officially known, and irresponsive faces. Is it any wonder that, under such circumstances, she looks about her anxiously for some living object round which to twine the tendrils of her better nature?—it may be only a bird, or a cat, or a lap-dog; it may be Bob the postman or policeman Jenkins. We laugh about her young man, whom we envisage to ourselves simply as a hulking

fellow and a domestic nuisance; we never reflect that to *her* all the interest and sympathy of life is concentrated and focussed upon that one single shadowy follower. He may be as uninteresting a slip of a plough-boy, turned driver of a London railway van, as ever was seen in this realm of England; or he may be as full of artistic aspiration and beautiful imaginings as Colin Churchill; but to her it is all the same; he is her one friend and confidant and social environment; he represents in her eyes universal society; he is the solitary unit who can play upon the full gamut of that many-toned and exquisitely modulated musical instrument, her inherited social nature. Take him away, and what is there left of her?—a mere automatic human machine for making beds or grinding out arithmetic for junior classes.

Has not humanity rightly pitched, by common consent, for the main theme of all

its verse and all its literature, upon this one universal passion, which, for a few short years at least, tinges with true romance and unspoken poetry even the simplest and most commonplace souls?

Colin felt the sadness of parting, too, but by no means so acutely as Minna. The door of fame was opening at last before him; Rome was looming large upon the mental horizon; dreams in marble were crystallising themselves down into future actuality; and in the near fulfilment of his life-long hopes, it was hardly to be expected that he should take the parting to heart so seriously as the little pupil-teacher herself had taken it. Besides, time, in anticipation at least, never looks nearly so long to men as to women. Don't we all know that a woman will cry her eyes out about a few months' absence, which to a man seems hardly worth making a fuss about? 'It's only for three or four years, you

know, Minna,' Colin said, as lightly as though three or four years were absolutely nothing ; and ah me, how long they looked to poor, lonely, heartsick little Minna ! She felt almost inclined to give up this up-hill work of teaching and self-education altogether, and return once more to the old fisherman's cottage away down at Wootton Mandeville. There at least she would have some human sympathies and interests to comfort and sustain her.

But Colin had lots of work to do, getting himself ready for his great start in life ; and he hardly entered to the full into little Minna's fears and troubles. He had to refurbish his entire wardrobe on a scale suited to a gentleman's servant—Minna was working hard in all her spare hours at making new shirts for him or mending old ones : he had to complete arrangements of all sorts for his eventful journey ; and he had to select among his books

and drawings which ones should accompany him upon his journey to Rome, and which should be consigned to the omnivorous second-hand book-stall. Wilton and Shelley and Bohn's 'Æschylus' he certainly couldn't do without; they were an integral part of his stock-in-trade as a sculptor, and to have left them behind would have been an irreparable error; but the old dog-eared 'Euripides' must go, and the other English translations from the classics would have made his box quite too heavy for Sir Henry to pay excess upon at Continental rates—so Cicolari told him. Still, the Flaxman plates must be got in somewhere, even if Shelley himself had to give way to them; and so must his own designs for his unexecuted statues, those mainstays of his future artistic career. Minna helped him to choose and pack them all, and she was round so often at Cicolari's in the evening that prim Miss Woollacott said somewhat sharply at last,

'It seems to me a very good thing, Minna Wroe, that this cousin of yours is going to Rome at last, as you tell me; for even though he's your only relation in London, I don't think it's quite proper or necessary for you to be round at his lodgings every other evening.'

Colin took a few lessons, too, in his future duties, from a gentleman's gentleman in Regent's Park. It wasn't a pleasant thing to do, and he sighed as he put away his books and sketches, and went out to receive his practical instruction from that very supercilious and elegant person; but it had to be done, and so he did it. Colin didn't care particularly for associating with the gentleman's gentleman; indeed, he was beginning slowly to realise now how wide a gulf separated the Colin Churchill of the Marylebone Road from the little Colin Churchill of Wootton Mandeville. He had lived so much by himself since he came to London, he had seen so little of

anybody except Minna and Cicolari, and he had been so entirely devoted to art and study, that he had never stopped to gauge his own progress before, and therefore had never fully felt in his own mind how great was the transformation that had insensibly come over him. Without knowing it himself, he had slowly developed from a gentleman's servant into an artist and a gentleman. And now he was being forced by accident or fate to take upon him once more the position of an ordinary valet.

Indeed, during the month that intervened between Colin's engagement by Sir Henry Wilberforce and his start for Rome, he wrote to his brother Sam over in America; and, shadowy memory as Sam had long since become to him, though he told him of his projected trip, and enlarged upon his hopes of attaining to the pinnacle of art in Rome, he was so ashamed of his mode of getting there

that he said nothing at all upon that point, but just glided easily over the questions of means and method. He didn't want his thriving brother in America to know that he was going to Rome, with all his high ideals and beautiful dreams, in no better position than as an old man's valet.

At last the slow month wore itself away gradually for Colin—how swift and short it seemed to Minna!—and the day came when he was really to set out for Paris, on his way to Italy. He was to start with his new master from Charing Cross station, and he had taken possession of his post by anticipation a couple of days earlier. Minna mustn't be at the station to see him off, of course; that would be unofficial; and if servants indulge in such doubtful luxuries as sweethearts, they must at least take care to meet them at some seemly time or season; but at any rate she could say good-bye to him the evening before,

and that was always something. Would he propose to her this time, at last, Minna wondered, or would he go away for that long, long journey, and leave her as much in doubt as ever as to whether he really did or didn't love her?

'It won't be for long, you see, little woman,' Colin said, kissing away her tears in Regent's Park, as well as he was able; 'it won't be for long, Minna; and then, when we meet again, I shall have come back a real sculptor. What a delightful meeting we shall have, Minna, and how awfully learned and clever you'll have got by that time! I shall be half afraid to talk to you. But you'll write to me every week, won't you, little woman? You'll promise me that? You *must* promise me to write to me every week, or at the very least every fortnight.'

It was some little crumb of comfort to Minna that he wanted her to write to him so

often. That showed at any rate that he really cared for her just ever such a tiny bit. She wiped her eyes again as she answered, 'Yes, Colin; I'll take great care never to miss writing to you.'

'That's right, little woman. And look here, you mustn't mind my giving you them; there's stamps enough for Italy to last you for a whole twelvemonth—fifty-two of them, Minna, so that it won't ever be any expense to you; and when those are gone, I'll send you some others.'

'Thank you, Colin,' Minna said, taking them quite simply and naturally. 'And you'll write to me, too, won't you, Colin?'

'My dear Minna! Why, of course I will. Who else on earth have I got to write to?'

'And you won't forget me, Colin?'

'Forget you, Minna! If ever I forget you, may my right hand forget her cunning—'

and what more dreadful thing could a sculptor say by way of an imprecation than that, now !'

'Oh, Colin, don't ! Don't say so ! Suppose it was to come true, you know !'

'But I don't mean to forget you, Minna ; so it won't come true. Little woman, I shall think of you always, and have your dear little gipsy face for ever before me. And now, Minna, this time we must really say good-bye. I'm out beyond my time already. Just one more ; thank you, darling. Good-bye, good-bye, Minna. Good-bye, dearest. One more. God bless you !'

'Good-bye, Colin. Good-bye, good-bye. Oh, Colin, my heart is breaking.'

And when that night Minna lay awake in her own bare small room at prim Miss Woollacott's, she thought it all over once more, and argued the pros and cons of the whole question deliberately to herself with

much trepidation. 'He called me "dearest,"' she thought in her sad little mind, 'and he said he'd never forget me; that looks very much as if he really loved me: but, then, he never asked me whether I loved him or not, and he never proposed to me—no, I'm quite sure he never proposed to me. I should have felt so much easier in my own mind if only before he went away he'd properly proposed to me!' And then she covered her head with the bed-clothes once more, and sobbed herself to sleep, to dream of Colin.

The very next evening, Colin was at Paris.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LITTLE CLOUD LIKE A MAN'S HAND.

AT the Gare de Lyon, Colin put his master safely into his *coupé-lit*, and then wandered along the train looking out for a carriage into which he might install himself comfortably for the long journey. All the carriages, as on all French express trains, were first-class; and Colin soon picked one out for himself, with a vacant place next the window. He jumped in and took his seat; and in two minutes more the train was off, and he found himself, at last, beyond the possibility of a doubt, on his way to Rome.

Rome, Rome, Rome! how the very name seemed to bound and thrill through Colin

Churchill's inmost nature! He looked at the little book of coupon tickets which his master had given him; yes, there it was, as clear as daylight, 'Paris, P.L.M., à Rome;' not a doubt about it. Rome, Rome, Rome! It had seemed a dream, a fancy, hitherto; and now it was just going to be converted into an actual living reality. He could hardly believe even now that he would ever get there. Would there be an accident at the summit level of the Mont Cenis tunnel, to prevent his ever reaching the goal of his ambition? It almost seemed as if there must be some hitch somewhere, for the idea of actually getting to Rome—that Rome that Cicolari had long ago told him was the capital of art—seemed too glorious and magnificent to be really true, for Colin Churchill.

For a while, the delightful exhilaration of knowing that that very carriage in which he sat was actually going straight through to

Rome left him little room to notice the faces or personalities of his fellow-travellers. But as they gradually got well outside the Paris ring, and launched into the country towards Fontainebleau, Colin had leisure to look about him and take stock of the companions he was to have on his way southward. Three of them were Frenchmen only going to Lyon and Marseille—*only*, Colin thought to himself, naively, for he despised anybody now who was bound for anywhere on earth save the city of Michael Angelo and Canova and Thorwaldsen; but the other two were bound, by the labels on their luggage, for Rome itself. One of them was a tall military-looking gentleman, with a grizzled grey moustache, a Colonel somebody, the hat-box said, but the name was covered by a label; the other, apparently his daughter, was a handsome girl of about twenty, largely built and self-possessed, like a woman who has lived much

in the world from her childhood upward. Colin saw at once, that, unlike little Minna (who had essentially a painter's face and figure), this graceful full-formed woman was entirely and exquisitely statuesque. The very pose of her arm upon the slight ledge of the window as she leaned out to look at the country was instinct with plastic capabilities. Colin, with his professional interest always uppermost, felt a perfect longing to have up a batch of clay forthwith and model it then and there upon the spot. He watched each new movement and posture so closely, in fact (of course in his capacity as a sculptor only), that the girl herself noticed his evident admiration, and took it sedately like a woman of the world. She didn't blush and shrink away timidly, as Minna would have done under the same circumstances (though her skin was many shades lighter than Minna's rich brunette complexion, and would have

shown the faintest suspicion of a blush, had one been present, far more readily); she merely observed and accepted Colin's silent tribute of admiration as her natural due. It made her just a trifle more self-conscious, perhaps, but that was all; indeed, one could hardly say whether even so the somewhat studied attitudes she seemed to be taking up were not really the ones which by long use had become the easiest for her. There are some beautiful women so accustomed to displaying their beauty to the best advantage that they can't even throw themselves down on a sofa in their own bedrooms without instinctively and automatically assuming a graceful position for all their limbs.

After a while, they fell into a conversation; and Colin, who was the most innocent and unartificial of men, was amused to find that even he, on the spur of the moment, had arrived at a very obvious, worldly-wise prin-

principle upon this subject. Wishing to get into a talk with the daughter, he felt half-unconsciously that it wouldn't do to begin by addressing her outright, but that he should first, with seeming guilelessness, attack her father. A man who is travelling with a pretty girl, in whatever relation, doesn't like you to begin an acquaintanceship of travel by speaking to her first; he resents your intrusion, and considers you have no right to talk to ladies under his escort. But when you begin by addressing himself, that is quite another matter; lured on by his quiet good sense, or his conversational powers, or his profound knowledge, or whatever else it is that he specially prides himself upon, you are soon launched upon general topics, and then the ladies of the party naturally chime in after a few minutes. To start by addressing him is a compliment to his intelligence or his social qualities; to start by addressing his

companion is a distinct slight to himself, at the same time that it displays your own cards far too openly. You can convert him at once either into a valuable ally or into an enemy and a jealous guardian. Of course every other man feels this from his teens; but Colin hadn't yet mixed much in the world, and he smiled to himself at his acumen in discovering it at all on the first trial.

‘Beautifully wooded country about here,’ he said at the earliest opportunity the military gentleman gave him by laying down his *Times* (even in France your Englishman will stick to his paper). ‘Not like most of France; so green and fresh-looking. This is Millet’s country, you know; he always works about the outskirts of Fontainebleau.’

‘Ah, indeed, does he?’ the colonel responded, having only a very vague idea floating through his mind that Millet or Millais or something of the sort was the name of

some painter fellow or other he had somewhere heard about. 'He works about Fontainebleau, does he, now? Dear me! How very interesting!'

Whenever people dismiss a subject from their minds by saying 'How very interesting!' you know at once they really mean that it doesn't interest them in the slightest degree, and they don't want to be bothered by hearing anything more about it; but Colin's observations upon mankind and the niceties of the English language had not yet carried him to this point of interpretative science, so he took the colonel literally at his word, and went on enthusiastically (for he was a great admirer of the peasant painter whose story was so like his own), 'Yes, he works at Fontainebleau. It was here, you know, that he painted his Angelus. Have you ever seen the Angelus?'

The colonel fidgeted about in his seat uneasily, and fumbled in a nervous way with

the corner of the *Times*. 'The Angelus!' he repeated, meditatively. 'Ah, yes, the Angelus. Gwen, my dear, have we seen Mr. Millet's Angelus? Was it in the Academy?'

'No, papa,' Gwen answered, smiling sweetly and composedly. 'We haven't seen it, and it wasn't in the Academy. M. Millet is the *French* painter, you remember, the painter who wears *sabots*. So delightfully romantic, isn't it,' turning to Colin, 'to be a great painter and yet still to wear *sabots*?'

This was a very cleverly delivered sentence of Miss Gwen's, for it was intended first to show that she at least, if not her father, knew who the unknown young artist was talking about (Gwen jumped readily at the conclusion that Colin *was* an artist), and secondly, to exonerate her papa from culpable ignorance in the artist's eyes by gently suggesting that a slight confusion of names sufficiently accounted for his obvious blunder. But it was also, quite

unintentionally, delivered point-blank at Colin Churchill's tenderest susceptibilities. This grand young lady, then, so calm and self-possessed, could sympathise with an artist who had risen, and who, even in the days of his comparative prosperity, still wore *sabots*. To be sure, Colin didn't exactly know what *sabots* were (perhaps the blue blouses which he saw all the French workmen were wearing?), for he was still innocent of all languages but his own, unless one excepts the Italian he had picked up in anticipation from Cicolari; but he guessed at least it was some kind of dress supposed to mark Millet's peasant origin, and that was quite enough for him. The grand young lady did not despise an artist who had been born in the ranks of the people.

'Yes,' he said warmly, 'it's very noble of him. Noble not merely that he has risen to paint such pictures as the Gleaners and the

Angelus, but that he isn't ashamed now to own the peasant people he has originally sprung from.'

'Oh, ah, certainly,' the colonel replied in a short sharp voice, though the remark was hardly addressed to him. 'Very creditable of the young man, indeed, not to be ashamed of his humble origin. Very creditable. Very creditable. Gwen, my dear, would you like to see the paper?'

'No, thank you, papa,' Gwen answered with another charming smile (fine teeth, too, by Jingo). 'You know I never care to read in a train in motion. Yes, quite a romantic story, this of Millet's; and I believe even now he's horribly poor, isn't he? he doesn't sell his pictures.'

'The highest art,' Colin said quietly, 'seldom meets with real recognition during the lifetime of the artist.'

'You're a painter yourself?' asked Gwen,

looking up at the handsome young man with close interest.

‘Not a painter; a sculptor; and I’m going to Rome to perfect myself in my art.’

‘A sculptor—to Rome!’ Gwen repeated to herself. ‘Oh, how nice! Why, we’re going to Rome, too, and we shall be able to go all the way together. I’m so glad, for I’m longing to be told all about art and artists.’

Colin smiled. ‘You’re fond of art, then?’ he asked simply.

‘Fond of it is exactly the word,’ Gwen answered. ‘I know very little about it; much less than I should like to do; but I’m intensely interested in it. And a sculptor, too! Do you know, I’ve often met lots of painters, but I never before met a sculptor.’

‘The loss has been theirs,’ Colin put in with professional gravity. ‘You would make a splendid model.’

The young man said it in the innocence of

his heart, thinking only what a grand bust of a Semiramis or an Artemisia one might have moulded from Miss Gwen's full womanly face and figure; but the observation made the colonel shudder with awe and astonishment on his padded cushions. 'Gwen, my dear,' he said, feebly interposing for the second time, 'hadn't you better change places with me? The draught from the window will be too much for you, I'm afraid.'

'Oh dear no, thank you, papa; not at all. I haven't been roasted, you know, for twenty years in the North-West Provinces, till every little breath of air chills me and nips me like a hothouse flower. So you think I would make a good model, do you? Well, that now I call a real compliment, because of course you regard me dispassionately from a sculpturesque point of view. I've been told that a great many faces do quite well enough to paint, but that only very few features are

regular and calm enough to be worth a sculptor's notice. Is that so, now ?'

'It is,' Colin answered, looking straight into her beautiful bold face. 'For example, some gipsy-looking girls, who are very pretty indeed with their brown skins and bright black eyes, and who make exceedingly taking pictures—Esthers, and Cleopatras, and so forth, you know—are quite useless from the plastic point of view: their good looks depend too much upon colour and upon passing shades of expression, while sculpture of course demands that the features should be almost faultlessly perfect and regular in absolute repose.'

The colonel looked uneasy again, and pulled up his collar nervously. 'Very fine occupation indeed, a sculptor's,' he edged in sideways. 'Delightful faculty to be able to do the living marble and all that kind of thing; very delightful, really.' The colonel was always equal to a transparent platitude

upon every occasion, and contributed very little else to the general conversation at any time.

‘And so delightful, too, to hear an artist talk about his art,’ Gwen added with a touch of genuine enthusiasm. ‘Do you know, I think I should love to be a sculptor. I should love even to go about and see the studios, and watch the beautiful things growing under your hands. I should love to have my bust taken, just so as to get to know how you do it all. It must be so lovely to see the shape forming itself slowly out of a raw block of marble.’

‘Oh, you know, we don’t do it all in the marble, at first,’ Colin said quickly. ‘It’s rather dirty work, the first modelling. If you come into a sculptor’s studio when he’s working in the clay, you’ll find him all daubed over with bits of mud, just like a common labourer.’

‘How very unpleasant!’ said the colonel coldly. ‘Hardly seems the sort of profession fit for a gentleman—now does it?’

‘Oh, papa, how can you be so dreadful! Why, it’s just beautiful. I should love to see it all. I think in some ways sculpture’s the very finest and noblest art of all—finer and nobler even than painting.’

‘The Greeks thought so,’ Colin assented with quiet assurance; ‘and they say Michael Angelo thought so too. Perhaps I may be prejudiced, but I certainly think so myself. There’s a purity about sculpture which you don’t get about painting or any other alternative form of art. In painting you may admit what is ugly—sparingly, to be sure, but still you may admit it. In sculpture everything must be beautiful. Beauty of pure form, without the accidental aid of colour, is what we aim at. Every limb must be in perfect proportion, every feature in

exquisite harmony. Any deformity, any weakness of outline, any mere ungracefulness, you see, militates against that perfection of shape to which sculpture entirely devotes itself. The coldness, hardness, and whiteness of marble make it appeal only to the highest taste; its rigorous self-abnegation in refusing the aid of colour gives it a special claim in the eyes of the purest and truest judges.'

'Then you don't like tinted statues?' the colonel put it. (He knew his ground here, for had he not seen Gibson's Venus?) 'Neither do I. I always thought Gibson made a great mistake there.'

'Gibson was a very great artist,' Colin replied, curling his lip almost disdainfully, for he felt the absurdity of the colonel's glibness in condemning the noblest of modern English sculptors off-hand in this easy, mock-critical fashion. 'Gibson was a very great artist, but I think his Venus was perhaps a step in the

wrong direction for all that. It's quite true that the Greeks tinted their statues——'

'Bless my soul, you don't mean to say so!' the colonel ejaculated parenthetically.

'And modern practice was doubtless founded on the mistake of supposing that, because the torsos we dig up are white now, they were white originally. But even the example of the Greeks doesn't settle every question without appeal. We've tried white marble, and found it succeed. We've tried tinting, and found it wanting. The fact is, you see, the attention of the eye can't be distracted. Either it attends to form, or else it attends to colour; rarely and imperfectly to both together. Take a vase. If it's covered with figures or flowers, our attention's distracted from the general outline to the painted objects it encloses. If its colouring's uniform, we think only of the beauty of form, because our attention isn't distracted from it by con-

flicting sensations. That's the long and the short of it, I think. Beauty of form's a higher taste than beauty of colour—at least, so we sculptors always fancy.'

Colin delivered these remarks as if he intended them for the colonel (though they were really meant for Miss Gwen's enlightenment), and the colonel was decidedly flattered by the cunning tribute to his tastes and interests thus delicately implied. But Gwen drank in every word the young man said with the deepest attention, and managed to make him go on with his subject till he had warmed to it thoroughly, and had launched out upon his own peculiar theories as to the purpose and function of his chosen art. All along, however, Colin pointed his remarks so cleverly at the colonel, while giving Gwen her fair share of the conversation, that the colonel quite forgot his first suspicions about the young sculptor, and grew gradually quite

cordial and friendly in demeanour. So well did they get on together that, by the time they had had lunch out of the colonel's basket, Colin had given the colonel his ideas as to the heinousness of palming off as sculpture veiled ladies and crying babies (both of which freaks of art, by the way, the colonel had hitherto vastly admired); while the colonel in return had imparted to Colin his famous stories of how he was once nearly killed by a tiger in a jungle at Boolundshuhr in the North-West Provinces, and how he had assisted to burn a fox out in a hunt at Gib., and how he had shot the biggest wapiti ever seen for twenty years in the neighbourhood of Ottawa. All which surprising adventures Colin received with the same sedulous show of polite interest that the colonel had extended in turn to his own talk about pictures and statues.

At last, they reached Dijon, and there Colin got out, as in duty bound, to inquire

whether his master was in want of anything. Sir Henry didn't need much, so Colin returned quickly to his own carriage.

'You have a friend in a *coupé-lit*, I see,' the colonel said, opening the door for the young stranger. 'An invalid, I suppose.'

Colin blushed visibly, so that Miss Gwen noticed his colour, and wondered what on earth could be the meaning of it. Till that moment, to say the truth, he had been so absorbed in his talk about art, and in observing Gwen (who interested him as all beautiful women interest a sculptor), that he had almost entirely forgotten, for the time being, his anomalous position. 'No, not an invalid,' he answered evasively, 'but a very old gentleman.'

'Ah,' the colonel put in, as the train moved away from Dijon station, 'I don't wonder people travel by *coupé-lit* when they can afford it, in spite of the prohibitive prices set upon it by these French companies. It's

most unpleasant having nothing but first-class carriages on the train. You have to travel with your own servants.'

Colin smiled feebly, but said nothing. It began to strike him that in the innocence of his heart he had made a mistake in being beguiled into conversation with these grand people. And yet it was their own fault. Miss Gwen had clearly done it all, with her seductive inquiries about art and artists.

'Or rather,' the colonel went on, 'one can always put one's own servants, of course, into another carriage; but one's never safe against having to travel with other people's. We're lucky to-day in being a pleasant party all together (these French gentlemen, though they're not companionable, are evidently very decent people); but sometimes, I know, I've had to travel on the Continent here, wedged in immovably between a fat lady's-maid and a gentleman's gentleman.'

Colin's face burned hot and crimson. 'I beg your pardon,' he said, in a faltering voice, almost relapsing in his confusion into his aboriginal Dorsetshire, 'but I ought, perhaps, to have told you sooner who you are travelling with. I am valet to Sir Henry Wilberforce: he is the gentleman in the *coupé-lit*, and he's my master.'

The colonel sank back on his cushions with a face as white as marble, while Colin's now flushed as red as a damask rose. 'A valet!' he cried faintly. 'Gwen, my dear, did he say a valet? What can all this mean? Didn't he tell us he was a sculptor going to Rome to practise his profession?'

'I did,' Colin answered defiantly, for he was on his mettle now. 'I did tell you so, and it's the truth. But I'm going as a valet. I couldn't afford to go in any other way, and so I took a situation, meaning to use my spare time in Rome to study sculpture.'

The colonel rocked himself up and down irresolutely for a while ; then he leant back a little more calmly in his seat, and gave himself up to a placid despair. 'At the next stopping station,' he thought to himself, 'we must get out and change into another carriage.' And he took up the 'Continental Bradshaw' with a sigh, to see if there was any chance of release before they got to Ambérieu.

But if the colonel was quite unmanned by this shocking disclosure, Miss Gwen's self-possession and calmness of demeanour was still wholly unshaken. She felt a little ashamed, indeed, that the colonel should so openly let Colin see into the profound depths of his good Philistine soul ; but she did her best to make up for it by seeming not in any way to notice her father's chilling reception of the charming young artist's strange intelligence. 'A valet, papa,' she cried in her

sprightly way, as unconcernedly as if she had been accustomed to associating intimately with valets for the last twenty years; 'how very singular! Why, I shouldn't be at all surprised if this was that Mr. Churchill (I think the name was) that Eva told us all about, who did that beautiful bas-relief, you know, ever so long ago, for poor dear uncle Philip.'

Colin bowed, his face still burning. 'That is my name,' he said, pulling out a card, on which was neatly engraved the simple legend, 'Mr. Colin Churchill, Sculptor.'

'And you used to live at Wootton Mandeville?' Gwen asked, with even more of interest in her tone than ever.

'I did.'

'Then, papa, this *is* the same Mr. Churchill. How very delightful! How lucky we should happen to meet you so, by accident! I call this really and truly a most remarkable and fortunate coincidence.'

‘Very remarkable indeed,’ the colonel moaned half inarticulately from his cushion.

Miss Gwen was a very clever woman, and she tried her best to whip up the flagging energies of the conversation for a fresh run; but it was all to no purpose. Colin was too hot and uncomfortable to continue the talk now, and the colonel was evidently by no means anxious to recommence it. His whole soul had concentrated itself upon the one idea of changing carriages at Ambérieu. So after a while Gwen gave up the attempt in despair, and the whole party was carried forward in moody silence towards the next station.

‘How awfully disappointing,’ Gwen thought to herself as she relapsed, vanquished, into her own corner. ‘He was talking so delightfully about such beautiful things, before papa went and made that horrid, stupid, unnecessary observation. Doesn’t papa see the difference between an enthusiast for art

and a common footman? A valet! I can see it all now. Every bit as romantic as Millet, except for the *sabots*. No wonder his face glowed so when he spoke about the painter who had risen from the ranks of the people. I think I know now what it is they mean by inspiration.'

At last the train reached Ambérieu. Great wits jump together; and as the carriage pulled up at the platform, both the colonel and Colin jumped out unanimously, to see whether they could find a vacant place in any other compartment. But the train was exactly like all other first-class expresses on the French railways; every place was taken through the whole long line of closely packed carriages. The colonel was the first to return. 'Gwen,' he whispered angrily to his daughter, in a fierce undertone, 'there isn't a solitary seat vacant in the whole of this confounded train: we shall have to go on with this man-

servant fellow, at least as far as Aix, and perhaps even all the way to Modane and Turin. Now mind, Gwen, whatever you do, don't have anything more to say to him than you can possibly help, or I shall be very severely displeased with you. How *could* you go on trying to talk to him again after he'd actually told you he was a gentleman's servant? I was ashamed of you, Gwen, positively ashamed of you. You've no proper pride or lady-like spirit in you. Why, the fellow himself had better feelings on the subject than you had, and was ashamed of himself for having taken us in so very disgracefully.'

'He was not,' Gwen answered stoutly. 'He was ashamed of *you*, papa, for not being able to recognise an artist and a gentleman even when you see him.'

The colonel's face grew black with wrath, and he was just going to make some angry

rejoinder, when Colin's arrival suddenly checked his further colloquy.

The young man's cheeks were still hot and red, but he entered the carriage with composure and dignity, and took his place once more in solemn silence. After a minute he spoke in a low voice to the colonel: 'I've been looking along the train, sir,' he said, 'to see if I could find myself a seat anywhere, but I can't discover one. I think you would have felt more comfortable if I could have left you, and I don't wish to stay anywhere, even in a public conveyance, where my society is not welcome. However, there's no help for it, so I must stop here till we reach Turin, when some of the other passengers will no doubt be getting out. I shall not molest you further, and I regret exceedingly that in temporary forgetfulness of my situation I should have been tempted into seeming to thrust my acquaintance unsolicited upon you.'

The colonel, misunderstanding this proud apology, muttered half-audibly to himself: 'Very right and proper of the young man, of course. He's sorry he so far forgot his natural station as to enter into conversation with his superiors. Very right and proper of him, under the circumstances, certainly, though he ought never to have presumed to speak to us at all in the first instance.'

Gwen bit her lip hard, and tried to turn away her burning face, now as red almost as Colin's; but she said nothing.

That evening, about twelve, as they were well on the way to the Mont Cenis, and Colin was dozing as best he might in his own corner, he suddenly felt a little piece of paste-board thrust quietly into his half-closed right hand. He looked up with a start. The colonel was snoring peacefully, and it was Miss Gwen's fingers that had pushed the card into his hollow hand. He glanced at it

casually by the dim light of the lamp. It contained only a few words. The engraved part ran thus: 'Miss Gwen Howard-Russell, Denhurst.' Underneath, in pencil, was a brief note—'Excuse my father's rudeness. I shall come to see your studio at Rome. G. H. R.'

Minna was the prettiest girl Colin Churchill had ever seen; but Miss Howard-Russell had exquisitely regular features, and when her big eyes met his for one flash that moment, they somehow seemed to thrill his nature through and through with a sort of sudden mesmeric influence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HIRAM IN WONDERLAND.

JUST a week after Colin Churchill reached Rome, three passengers by an American steamer stood in the big gaudy refreshment-room at Lime Street Station, Liverpool, waiting for the hour for the up express to start for London.

‘We’d better have a little lunch before we get off,’ Sam Churchill said to his two companions. ‘Don’t you think so, Mr. Audouin?’

Audouin nodded. ‘For my part,’ he said, ‘I shall have a Bath bun and a glass of ale. They remind one so delightfully of England. Will you give me a glass of bitter, please.’

Hiram drew back a little in surprise. He

gazed at the gorgeous young lady who pulled the handle of the beer-engine (of course he had never seen a woman serving drink before), and then he glanced inquiringly at Sam Churchill. 'Do tell me,' he whispered in an awe-struck undertone; 'is that a barmaid?'

Sam hardly took in the point of the question for the moment, it seemed so natural to him to see a girl drawing beer at an English refreshment-room, though in the land of his adoption that function is always performed by a male attendant, known as a saloon-keeper; but he answered unconcernedly: 'Well, yes, she's about that, I reckon, though I dare say she wouldn't admire at you to call her so.'

Hiram looked with all his eyes agog upon the gorgeous young lady. 'Well,' he said slowly, half to himself, 'that's just charming. A barmaid! Why it's exactly the same as if it were in "Tom Jones" or "Roderick Random."'

Sam Churchill's good-humoured face expanded slowly into a broad smile. That was a picturesque point of view of barmaids which he had never before conceived as possible. 'What'll you take, Hiram?' he asked. 'This is a pork-pie here; will you try it?'

'A pork-pie!' Hiram cried, enchanted. 'A pork-pie! You don't mean to say so! Will I try it? I should think I would, rather. Why, you know, Sam, one reads about pork-pies in Dickens!'

This time Audouin laughed too. 'Really, Hiram,' he said, 'if you're going on at this rate you'll find all Europe one vast storehouse of bookish allusiveness. A man who can extract a literary interest out of a pork-pie would be capable of writing poetry, as Stella said, about a broomstick. I assure you you'll find the crust sodden and the internal compound frightfully indigestible.'

'But, I say,' Hiram went on, scanning the

greasy paper on the outside with the deepest attention. 'Look here, ain't this lovely, either? It says, "Patronised by his Grace the Duke of Rutland and the Gentlemen of the Melton Mowbray Hunt." I shall have some of that, anyway, though it seems rather like desecration to go and actually eat them. One can fancy the red coats and all the rest of it, can't you: and the hare running away round the corner just the same as in "Sandford and Merton"?'

'Twouldn't be a hare,' Sam replied, with just a faint British curl of the lip at the Yankee blunder (the Englishman was beginning to come uppermost in him again now his foot was once more, metaphorically, upon his native heath). 'It'd be a fox, you know, Hiram.'

'Better and better,' Hiram cried enthusiastically, forgetting for once in his life his habitual self-restraint. 'A fox! How glorious!

Just fancy eating a Dickens's pork-pie patronised by a man they call a duke, and the red-coated squire people who hunt foxes across country with a horn and a halloo. It's every bit as good as going back to the old coaching days or the reign of Queen Elizabeth.'

'The pork-pies are quite fresh, sir,' put in the gorgeous young lady in an offended manner, evidently taking the last remark as an unjust aspersion upon the character of her saleable goods and chattels. 'We get them direct twice a week from the makers in Leicestershire.'

'There again,' Hiram exclaimed, with a glow of delight; 'why, Mr. Audouin, it's just like fairy-land. Do you hear what the lady says? she says they come from Leicestershire. Just imagine; from Leicestershire! Queen Elizabeth and the ring, and all the rest of it. Goodness gracious, I do believe this country'll

be enough to turn one's head, almost, if it goes on like this much longer.'

The gorgeous young lady evidently quite agreed with him upon that important point, for she retired to a tittering conversation with three other equally gorgeous persons at the far end of the marble-covered counter. Hiram, however, was too charmed with the intense Britannicity (as Audouin called it) of everything around him to take much notice of the gorgeous young lady's personal proceedings. It was all so new and delightful, so redolent of things he had read about familiarly from his childhood upward, but never before thoroughly realised as tangible and visible actualities. Pork-pies, then, positively existed in the flesh and crust ; London stout was no mere airy figment of the novelist's imagination ; red-cheeked women talked before his very eyes to blue-coated policemen ; and porters in mediæval uniforms bundled soldiers

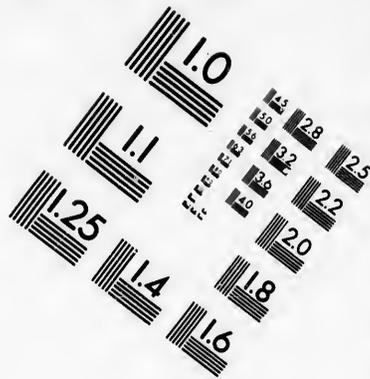
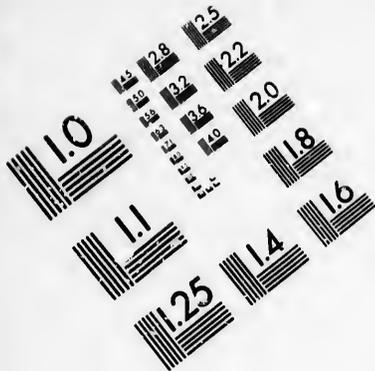
in still more mediæval scarlet garb into cars which they positively described as carriages, and which were seen to be divided inside into small compartments by a transverse wooden partition. . Those were the third-class passengers he had read about in fiction, and yet they did not seem inclined to rise against their oppressors, but smoked and chaffed as merrily as the favoured occupants of the cushioned carriages—to say the plain truth, indeed, a great deal more merrily. All was wonderful, admirable, phantasmagoric beyond his wildest and dearest expectations. He had looked forward to a marvellous, poetical England of cathedrals and castles, but he had hardly expected that all-pervading mediæval tone which came out even in the dedication of the practical pork-pie of commerce to the cult of his Grace the Duke of Rutland and the Gentlemen of the Melton Mowbray Hunt.

To every intelligent young American,

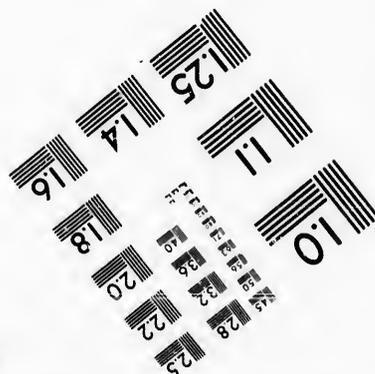
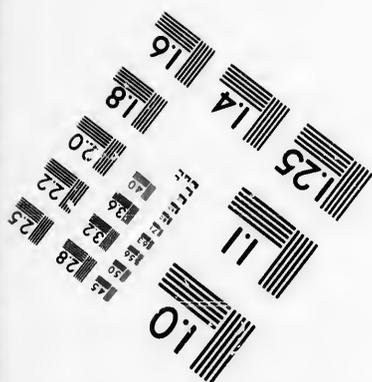
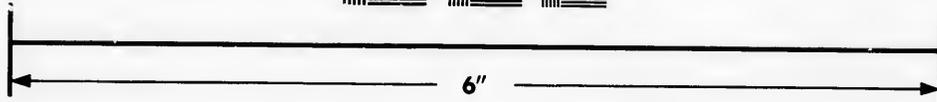
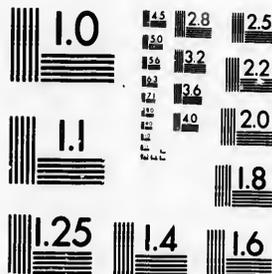
indeed, the first glimpse of England is something more than a mere introduction to a new country; it is as though the sun had gone back upon the dial of history, and had carried one bodily from the democratic modern order of things into the midst of an older semi-feudal and vastly more heterogeneous state of society. But to Hiram Winthrop in particular, that journey by the London and North-Western Line from Liverpool to Euston was, as it were, a new spiritual birth, a first transference into the one world for which alone he was congenitally fitted. Audouin himself, with his cold Boston criticism and his cultivated indifference, was quite surprised at the young man's undisguised enthusiasm. All along the line, the panorama of England seemed but one long unfolding of half-familiar wonders—things pictured, and read about, and dreamt of, for many years, yet never before beheld or realised. First it was the

carefully tilled fields, the trim hedges, the parks and gardens, the snug English farm-houses, the endless succession of cultivated land, and beautiful pleasure grounds, and well-timbered copses. Hiram cast his eye back upon Syracuse and the deacon's farm with a feeling of awe and gratitude. Great heavens, what a contrast from the bare wheat fields and treeless roads and long unlovely snake-fences of Geauga County! Here, in fact, was tillage that even the deacon would have admired as good farming, and yet it had not succeeded in defacing the natural beauty of the undulating Cheshire country, but had rather actually improved and heightened it. Yes, this was Cheshire, and those were Cheshire cows, ultimately responsible for the historical Cheshire cheeses; while yonder was a Cheshire cat, sleeping lazily on an ivy-grown wall, though Hiram was fain to admit, without the grin for which alone the Cheshire





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cat is proverbially famous. Ivy—he had never seen ivy before—ay, ivy actually clinging to an old church tower, a tower that even Hiram's unaccustomed eyes could readily date back to the Plantagenet period. That church positively had a rector ; and the broken stone by the yew-tree in the churchyard (Sam Churchill being witness) was the last relic of the carved cross of Catholic antiquity. And those little white flowers scattered over the pastures, Audouin told him, were really daisies. Take it how he would, Hiram could hardly believe his own senses, that here he was, being whirled by an express train in a small oblong box of a thing they called a first-class compartment, right across the very face of that living fossil of a country, beautiful, old-fashioned, antique England.

To most of us, the journey from Liverpool to Euston lies only through a high flat country, past a number of dull, ordinary, un-

interesting railway stations. It is, in fact, about as unpicturesque a bit of travelling as a man can do within the four girdling sea-walls of this beautiful isle of Britain. But to Hiram Winthrop it was the most absolutely fairy-like and romantic journey he had ever undertaken in the whole course of his mundane existence. First they passed through Lancashire, and then through Cheshire, and then on over the impalpable boundary line into Staffordshire. Why, those tall towers over yonder were Lichfield Cathedral; and that little town on the left was Sam Johnson's countrified Lichfield! Here comes George Eliot's Nuneaton, and after it Tom Brown's and Arnold's Rugby. At Bletchley, you read on the notice-board: 'Change here for Oxford'; great heavens, just as if Oxford, *the* Oxford, were nothing more than Orange or Chattawauga! And here is Tring, where Robert Stephenson made his great cutting;

and there is Harrow-on-the-Hill, where Paul Howard, the marauding buccaneer of the Caribbean Sea, received the first rudiments of faith and religion. Not a village along the line but had its resonant echo in the young man's memory; not a manor house, steeple, or farmyard but had its glamour of romance for the young man's fancy. The very men and women seemed to take the familiar shapes of well-known characters. Colonel Newcome, tall and bronzed by Indian suns, paced the platform alone at Crewe; Dick Swiveller, penniless and jaunty as ever, lounged about the refreshment-room at Blisworth Junction; even Trulliber himself, a little modernised in outer garb, but essentially the same in face and feature, dived red-cheeked after his luggage into the crowded van at Willesden. And so, by rapid stages, through a world of unspeakable delight, the engine rolled them swiftly into the midst of

seething, grimy, opulent, squalid, hungry, all-embracing London.

‘I do hope,’ Hiram said to Sam, as they drove together through the strange labyrinth of narrow, dirty streets, to the big modern hotel of Audouin’s choosing—‘I do hope we shall be in time to catch your brother before he goes to Rome. Europe does look just too delicious ; but you’ll admit it’s pretty bustling and hurrying in some places. I don’t know that I’d care so much to go alone as if I had him with me.’

‘Oh, he’s sure to be here,’ Sam answered confidently. ‘Since I wired him from New York, I’ve made my mind easy about that. He’d wait to see me before starting ; that’s certain.’

‘And if he isn’t, Hiram,’ Audouin put in, ‘I’ll go on with you. It’s rather an undertaking to go touring alone in Europe, when you’re fresh to it. We’re wild men of the

woods, you and I, more at home among the woodchucks and sheldrakes, I conceive, than among the hotels, and streets, and railway stations. You were born in the wilderness: I have fled to it: we're both of us out of our element in the stir and bustle here; so to fortify one another, we'll face it together.'

The fact is, their joint journey had been altogether a very hasty and unpremeditated affair. Audouin had long been urging Hiram to go to Europe, and study art in real earnest; and Hiram had been putting it off and putting it off on various pretences, but really because he didn't want to go until he was able to pay his way honestly out of his own resources. At last, however, Sam Churchill had received a letter from his brother Colin, full of Colin's completed project of going to Rome. This was a chance for Hiram, both Sam and Audouin argued,

which he oughtn't lightly to throw away. Colin had been working with an Italian marble-cutter in London; he would be going to Rome with the intention of studying the highest art at the lowest possible prices; and he would probably be glad enough to meet with another young man to share expenses and to keep him company in the unknown city. So between the two, almost before he knew what he was doing, Hiram had been hustled off down to New York, put on board a White Star liner, and conveyed triumphantly over to Europe, between a double guard of Sam and Audouin. Sam had long been contemplating a visit to the old country, to see his father and mother before they died; and now the occasion thus afforded by Colin's resolution seemed propitious for taking his voyage in good company; while as to Audouin, he was so fully in earnest about redeeming Hiram from the advertising style

of art, and sending him to Rome to study painting in real earnest, that he undertook to convey him in person, lest any infirmity of purpose should chance to overcome him by the way. He had at last persuaded Hiram to accept a small loan for the necessary expenses of his first year at Rome: and he had also managed to make his young friend believe that at the end of that time his art would begin to bring him in enough to live upon. For which pious fraud, Audouin earnestly trusted the powers that be would deal leniently with him, judging him only by the measure of his good intentions. For if at the end of the first year, Hiram's exchequer still showed a chronic deficit, it would be easy enough, he thought, to float another loan upon himself by way of lightening the temporary tightness of the money market.

It was late that night when they reached the hotel, so they contented themselves with

dinner in the coffee-room (mark that word—a coffee-room—exactly where they used to dine in David Copperfield!) without making any attempt to see Colin the same evening. But early the next day the three sallied forth together into the streets of London, and made their way, by lanes and cross-cuts, whose very names seemed historical to Hiram, up to Cicolari's studio in the Marylebone Road. The little Italian bowed them in with greatunction—three American customers by the look of them, good perhaps for a replica of the celebrated Cicolari Ariadne—and inquired politely what might be their business.

‘My name is Churchill,’ Sam said abruptly. ‘My brother has been working with you here. Is he still in London?’

Cicolari went quickly through a short pantomime expressive of deep regret that Sam should have come to make inquiries a week too late, mingled with effusive pleasure

at securing the acquaintance of Colin's most excellent and highly respected brother. 'If you had come a week ago,' he added, supplementarily, in spoken language, 'you would have been in time to see my very dear friend, your brozzer. But you are not in time; your brozzer is gone away. He is gone to Rome, to Rome' (with a spacious wave of the hand) 'to become ze greatest of living sculptors. He is a genius, and all geniuses must go to Rome. Zat is ze proper home for zem.' And Cicolari, drawing his finger rapidly round in an ever-diminishing circle, planted it at last on a spot in the very centre, supposed to symbolise the metropolis of art.

'Gone to Rome!' Sam cried disappointed. 'But why did he go so soon? Didn't he get my telegram?'

'He has had no telegram from you or he would tell me of it,' answered the Italian, with a pantomimic expression of the closest

intimacy between himself and Colin. 'He went away a week ago.'

'Do you know where he's gone to in Rome?' asked Audouin.

'I do not know where he is gone to, but he has gone as valet to Sir Somebody—Sir Henry Wilberforce I sink zey call him'—Cicolari answered with open hands spread before him.

Sam Churchill's democratic instincts rose at once in horror and astonishment. 'As what!' he cried. 'As *valet*?'

Cicolari only replied by going through the operation of brushing an imaginary coat with an aërial clothes-brush and folding it neatly on a non-existent chair by the side of the inconsolable marble widow.

After twelve years of America, Sam Churchill was certainly a little shocked and annoyed at the idea of his own brother Colin—the future great sculptor and artist—having

gone to Rome as another man's body-servant. It hurt not only his acquired republican feelings, but what lies far deeper than those, his amour propre. And he was vexed, too, that Cicolari should have blurted out the plain truth so carelessly before Hiram and Audouin. His cheeks burned hot with his discomfiture; but he only turned and said to them as coolly as he was able: 'Our bird has flown, it seems. We must fly after him.'

'How soon?' asked Audouin quickly.

'This very day,' Sam answered with decision.

'And you, Hiram?' Audouin said.

'I am as clay in the hands of the potter,' Hiram replied, smiling. 'For my own part, I should have liked to stop a week or two in London, and see some of the places one has heard and read so much about. But you've brought me over by main force between you, Mr. Audouin, and I suppose I must let you

both do as you will with me. If Sam wants to follow his brother immediately, I'm ready to go with you and leave London for some future visit.'

Sam got what further particulars he could from Cicolari, hailed a passing cab impetuously, and drove straight back to the hotel. In an hour they had packed their valises again after their one night in England, and were off to Charing Cross, to catch the tidal train for Paris, on their way to Italy. Hiram watched the cliffs of Folkestone fading behind him with a somewhat heavy heart; for artist as he was, he somehow felt in the corners of his being as though England were the real unknown lady of his love, and Rome, which he had never seen, likely to prove but a cold and irresponsive sort of mistress. Still, in Audouin's care, he was just what he himself had said, clay in the hands of the potter; for Hiram Winthrop was one of those natures

that no man can drive, but that any man can lead with the slightest display of genuine sympathy.

Yet he had one other cause of regret at leaving England: for Chester is in England, and Gwen was presumably at Chester. Gwen—Chester, Gwen—Chester, Gwen—Chester: absurd, romantic, utterly ridiculous; yet all the way from Folkestone to Boulogne, as the vessel lurched from side to side, it made a sort of long-drawn see-saw melody in Hiram Winthrop's brain to the reiterated names of Gwen and Chester.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNWARRANTABLE INTRUSION.

SIR HENRY WILBERFORCE sat sipping his morning coffee in his most leisurely fashion by the table in his own private salon at the Hôtel de l'Allemagne in Rome. 'Capital man, this fellow Churchill,' he said to himself approvingly, as he saw Colin close the door noiselessly behind him! 'By far the best person for the place I've ever had since that fool Simpson went off so suddenly and got married, confound him. He's so quiet and unobtrusive in all his movements, and he talks so well, and has such a respectable accent and manner. Now Dobbs's accent was quite enough to drive a man wild. I always

wanted to throw a boot at him—indeed I've done it more than once—he was so utterly unendurable. This fellow, on the other hand, talks really just like a gentleman; in fact, the only thing I've got to say against him, so far (there's always something or other turning up in the long run), the only thing I've got to say against him yet, is that he's positively a deuced sight *too* gentlemanly and nice-looking and well-mannered altogether. A servant oughtn't to be *too* well-mannered. Why, that old Mrs. Cregoe, with the obvious wig and the powdered face, who sits at the table d'hôte nearly opposite me, actually went up and spoke to him in the passage yesterday, taking him for one of the visitors! Awkward, exceedingly awkward, when people mistake your man for your nephew, as she did! But otherwise, the fellow's really a capital servant. He—well, what the dickens do *you* want now, I wonder?'

'A signorina below wishes to speak with you, excellency,' the Italian servant put in, bowing.

'A signorina! What the deuce! Did she give her card, Agostino?'

'The signorina said you would not know her, signor. Shall I introduce her? Ah! here she is.'

Sir Henry rose and made a slight stiff inclination, as who should say: 'Now what the devil can *you* want with me, I wonder?' Gwen, nothing abashed, laid down her card upon the table, which Sir Henry then and there took up and looked at narrowly, putting on his eyeglass for the purpose.

'What an ill-mannered surly old bear,' Gwen thought to herself; 'and what an absurd thing that that delightful Mr. Churchill should have to go as the old wretch's valet. I shall take care to put a stop to that arrangement, anyhow.'

‘Well,’ Sir Henry said, glancing suspiciously from the card to Gwen ‘May I ask—ur—to what I owe the honour of this visit?’

‘Oh, certainly,’ Gwen answered with perfect composure (she was never lacking in that repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere). ‘But as it’s rather a long story to tell, perhaps you’ll excuse my sitting down while I tell it.’ And Gwen half took a chair herself, but at the same time half compelled Sir Henry to push it towards her also, with a sort of grudging unmannerly politeness. Sir Henry, after standing himself for a second or two longer, and then discovering that Gwen was waiting for him to be seated before beginning to disclose her business, dropped in a helpless querulous fashion into the small armchair opposite, and prepared himself feebly for the tête-à-tête.

‘The business I’ve come about,’ Gwen

went on quietly, is a rather peculiar one. The fact is my father and I travelled to Rome the other day in the same railway carriage with your servant, whose name, he told us, is Colin Churchill.'

Sir Henry nodded a non-committing acquiescence. 'The deuce!' he thought to himself. 'Something or other turned up already against him.—I hope, I'm sure, Miss—ur—let me see your card here once more—ur—Miss Howard-Russell—I hope, I'm sure, he didn't in any way behave impertinently, or make himself at all disagreeable to you. You see, one's obliged to put one's servants into carriages with other people on these continental lines, which of course is very unpleasant for—ur—for those other people.'

'Not at all,' Gwen answered with a charming smile, which almost melted even stony old Sir Henry. 'Not at all; quite the

contrary, I assure you. His society and conversation were really quite delightful. Indeed, that's just what I've come about.'

Sir Henry wriggled uneasily in his chair, put up his eyeglass for the third time, and stared at Gwen in puzzled wonderment. His valet's society was really quite delightful! How extraordinary! Could this very handsome and quite presentable young woman—with a double-barrelled surname too—be after all nothing more than a lady's maid who had had a flirtation with his new valet? But if so, and if she had come to propose for Churchill, so to speak, what the deuce could she want to see *him* for? He dropped his eyeglass once more in silent dubitation, and merely muttered cautiously: 'Indeed!'

'Yes, very much so altogether,' Gwen went on boldly, in spite of Sir Henry's freezing rigidity. 'The fact is, I wanted to speak to you about him, because, you know, really

and truly, he isn't a valet at all, and he oughtn't to be one.'

Sir Henry started visibly. 'Not a valet!' he cried. 'Why, if it comes to that, I've found him a very useful and capable person for the place. But I don't quite understand you. Am I to gather that you mean he's an impostor—a thief in disguise, or something of that sort? I picked him up, certainly, under rather peculiar circumstances, just because he could speak a little Italian.'

Gwen laughed a little joyous ringing laugh. 'Oh, no!' she said quickly, 'nothing of that sort, certainly. I meant quite the opposite. Mr. Churchill's a sculptor, and a very accomplished well-read artist.'

Sir Henry rose from his chair nervously. 'You don't mean to say so!' he cried in surprise. 'You quite astonish me. And yet, now you mention it, I've certainly noticed that the young man had a very gentlemanly

voice and accent. And then his manners—quite unexceptionable. But what the deuce—excuse an old man's freedom of language—what the deuce, my dear madam, does he mean by playing such a scurvy trick upon me as this—passing himself off for an ordinary valet?’

‘That's just what I've come about, Sir Henry. He happened to mention your name to my father and myself, and to allude to the nature of his relations with you; and I was so much interested in the young man that I looked your name up in the visitors' list in the “Italian Times,” and came round to speak to you about him.’

Sir Henry raised his eyebrows slightly, but answered nothing.

‘And he's not playing you any trick; that's the worst of it,’ Gwen went on boldly, taking no notice of Sir Henry's indifferent politeness. ‘He's poor, and he's a sculptor.

He's been working for several years with a small Italian artist in the Marylebone Road.'

'Ah! yes, yes; I remember. He said he'd been engaged as a marble-cutter since he left his last situation. Why, bless my soul, his last situation was with old Mr. Philip Howard-Russell, of Wootton Mandeville. Let me see—your card—ah! quite so. He must have been some relation of yours, I should imagine.'

'My uncle,' Gwen answered, glancing up at him defiantly. To her the relationship was no introduction.

Sir Henry bowed again slightly. 'Excuse my stupidity,' he said, with more politeness than he had hitherto shown. 'I ought of course to have recognised your name at once. I knew your uncle. A most delightful man, and a brother collector.—The selfish old pig,' he thought to himself with an internal sneer; 'he was the most disagreeable bumptious old

fellow I ever met in the whole course of my experience. Why, he pretended to doubt the genuineness of my Pinturicchio! But at least he was a man of good family, and his niece, in spite of the interest she evidently takes in my servant Churchill, is no doubt 'a person whom one ought to treat civilly.' For Sir Henry was one of those ingenuous people who don't think there is any necessity at all for treating civilly that inconsiderable section of humanity which doesn't happen to be connected with men of good family.

'Yes,' Gwen went on, 'Mr. Churchill, as we learnt quite incidentally, was a long time since, when he was quite a boy, in my Uncle Philip's employment. But he has risen by his own talent since then, and now he's a sculptor: there's his card which he gave me, and he has described himself there correctly, as you see. Now, he's poor, it seems, and as he was very anxious to come to Rome, and

could find no other way of coming, he decided to come here as a valet. Wasn't that splendid of him! You can see at once that such devotion to art shows what a very remarkable young man he must really be—you're a lover of art yourself, and so you can sympathise with him—to come away as a servant, so as to get to Rome and see the works of Michael Angelo, and Raphael, and—and—and—all that sort of thing, you know,' Gwen added feebly, breaking down in her strenuous effort for a completion to her imagined trio.

Sir Henry hawed a moment. 'Well,' he said slowly, 'I must confess I don't exactly agree with you that it was such a very splendid thing of him to palm himself off upon me as a servant in this abominable underhand manner. You'll excuse me, my dear madam, but it seems to me—I may be wrong, but it seems to me certainly—that a man's either a

servant or a sculptor: confound it all, he can't very well be both together. If he comes to me and gets a place on the representation that he's a valet, and then goes and represents to you that he's a sculptor, why, in that case—in that case, I say, it's the very devil. You'll excuse my saying it, but hang me if I can see what there is after all so very fine or splendid about it.'

Gwen bit her lip. 'If you'd heard how beautifully he talked about art in the train,' she said persuasively, 'and how much he knew about Millet and Thorwaldsen and the old masters, and how at home he was in all the great picture-galleries in England, you wouldn't be surprised that he should wish, by hook or by crook, to come to Italy. Why, he can talk quite charmingly and delightfully about—about—about Titian and Perugino and Caravaggio, and I'm sure I don't know how many other great painters and people.'

Sir Henry bent his head again in silent acquiescence. He remembered now that mysterious remark of Colin's, on the day of their first meeting, as to the rival Pinturicchio in the Knowle gallery. The woman was evidently right: that fellow Churchill was a bit of an artist, and had been quizzing his personal peculiarities for a whole fortnight, under cover of acting as valet. Now it's all very well for an enthusiastic young sculptor to go coming to Rome as a man-servant, in order to study Michael Angelo and Thorwaldsen, so long as he comes as somebody else's man-servant; but when he comes as one's own attendant, hang it all, you know, that's quite another matter. 'Well,' Sir Henry said, looking curiously at Gwen's embarrassed face, 'and what do you wish to ask me about my man Churchill?'

Gwen flushed up angrily at the obvious insolence of his inquiry, but she took no

notice of it in words for the sake of her errand. 'I only called,' she said quietly, 'though it's a little unusual for a lady to do so' (Sir Henry inclined his head gravely once more, as who should say I quite agree with you), 'because I felt so much interested in Mr. Churchill. I think it isn't right to let him remain as a servant; he ought to be allowed to continue his work as a sculptor without delay. Sir Henry, you'll release him from his engagement, I'm sure, and let him go on with his own proper studies.'

'Release him, my dear young lady,' Sir Henry answered sardonically. 'Release him! release him! By Jove, that's hardly the word I should myself apply to it. I shall certainly send him packing, you may be sure, at the earliest convenient opportunity, and he may consider himself deuced lucky if I don't get him into serious trouble for engaging himself to me under what comes perilously near being

false pretences. You must excuse my frankness, Miss Howard-Russell; but I'm an old man, and I don't see why I should be left at a minute's notice here in Rome, at the mercy of these confounded foreigners, without a valet. After what you tell me, it's plain I can't have him here spying upon me all the time in every action; but it's devilish uncomfortable, I can tell you, to be left a thousand miles away from home without anybody on earth to do anything for one.'

What could Gwen say? She felt instinctively in her own mind that Sir Henry's complaint was perfectly natural and excusable. When a man engages a man-servant, he means to engage a person of a certain comparatively fixed and recognisable social status, and he certainly doesn't want to have his habits and manners of life made an open secret to a fellow-being of something like his own level of intelligence and education. But, on the

other hand, she could see, too, that this nice distinction was never likely to occur to Colin's simple intelligence. Little as she had seen of him, and little as he had told her of his story, she quite understood that the old vicar's ex-pageboy wouldn't be able, in all probability, to feel the difference to Sir Henry Wilberforce between having him for a valet and having any ordinary gentleman's servant. However, happily, it didn't much matter what Sir Henry thought about it: the important point was that that clever young Mr. Churchill was to be released forthwith from his absurd engagement and left free to follow his own natural artistic promptings. That was all, of course, that Gwen, for her part, really cared about.

'Then you'll dismiss him, I suppose?' she asked again after an awkward pause. 'You'll allow him to take to his proper work as a sculptor?'

'Why, really, my dear lady, I don't care

twopence, so far as that goes, what the dickens he chooses to take to as soon as he's left me; but I'm certainly not going to keep an educated sculptor fellow spying about me any longer and collecting notes to retail by-and-by to half Rome upon my personal peculiarities. Oh dear no, certainly not. I shall pay him his month's wages and compensation for board and lodging, and I shall send him about his business this very minute.'

Gwen rose and bowed slightly in her most stately manner. 'If that's so,' she said quietly, 'the object of my visit's more than attained already. I won't keep you any longer. Good morning.'

Sir Henry rose in return and answered, 'Good morning,' with frigid courtesy.

Gwen moved towards the door, which Sir Henry was just about to open for her, when Agostino flung it wide once more from out-

side, and announced in a loud voice: 'Signor Churchill, Signor Vintrop.'

Gwen trembled a little. Mr. Churchill! Must she meet him, then, face to face under these very awkward circumstances? It seemed so, for there was no escape from it. She couldn't get away before they entered.

The two strangers thus announced walked into the salon together, and in a moment Gwen saw that it wasn't Colin, but somebody else, somewhat older, yet a little like him. At the very same moment Hiram Winthrop, entering that unknown room in that unknown city, felt a sudden thrill course fiercely through his inmost marrow, and looked up with a glance of instantaneous recognition to the strange lady. How wonderful! how magnificent! how unexpected! It was she; it was the glorious apparition of the Thousand Islands; it was (he knew no other name for her), it was Gwen of Chester!

Shy and retiring as he was by nature, Hiram so far forgot everything else at that moment, except his joy at this unexpected meeting, that he advanced quite naturally and held out his hand to Gwen, who took it frankly, but with a curious smile of half-inquiring welcome.

‘You don’t remember me, Miss Gwen,’ he said in a voice of some little disappointment (he could only call her by her Christian name, which mode of address sounds far less familiar to American ears than to us more ceremonious English). ‘My name is Winthrop, and I’ve had the pleasure of meeting you before—once—have you forgotten? . . . at the Thousand Islands.’

Gwen shook her head a little doubtfully. ‘Well, to say the truth,’ she answered with a pleasant smile, ‘I don’t quite recollect you. We met so many people, you see, while we were in America.’

‘But I was painting a sketch of a little island near Alexandria Bay,’ Hiram went on eagerly, but somewhat crestfallen (how strange that he should remember her every feature so well, while she! she had utterly forgotten him). ‘Don’t you recollect? you were walking with your father near the river, and you came across two of us sketching, under a little cliff at Alexandria Bay, and you came down and looked at my picture.’

‘Oh, yes,’ Gwen cried, a sudden flash of recognition spreading over her face. ‘I remember all about it now. I remember your picture perfectly.’ (Hiram’s eyes brightened immediately.) ‘There was a single little island in it, of course, with a solitary great dark pine towering above it, against a liquid deep blue background of cloudless sky.’ (Hiram nodded in delight at her accurate description.) ‘Oh yes, I remember the picture perfectly, though I’ve quite forgotten you yourself.’

But I recollect your friend so well ; such a charming person, the most delightful conversation—a Mr. Audouin, he said his name was. I remember him more distinctly than almost anybody else we met during the whole of our American visit.'

Poor Hiram ! How little Gwen knew as she said those simple words she was plunging a dagger into his very heart ! He almost reeled beneath that crushing, terrible disappointment. Here for all those long months he had been treasuring up the picture of Gwen upon his mental vision, thinking of her, looking at her, dreaming about her ; he had come to Europe hoping and trusting somewhere or other at last to find her ; he had stumbled up against her accidentally his very first day in Rome, and now that he stood there actually face to face with her, the queen of his fancy, his heart's ideal—why, she herself had positively forgotten all about him !

She remembered Audouin, that supplanter Audouin; but she had clean forgotten poor solitary yearning Hiram! What else could he expect, indeed? It was all perfectly natural. Who was he, that such a one as Gwen should ever remember him? What presumption, what folly on his part to expect he could have left the slightest image imprinted upon her memory! And yet, somehow, in spite of sober reason, he couldn't help feeling horribly and unutterably disappointed. His face fell with a sudden collapse, but he managed feebly to mutter half aloud: 'Oh, yes, a most delightful person, Mr. Audouin.'

Meanwhile, Sir Henry, fidgeting with the back of a chair in his hand, stood waiting to hear what was the meaning of this singular irruption of American barbarians. Who were they? Had they come by appointment? Why did they recognise this real or pretended niece of that old idiot, Howard-Russell? Was it all a plant to rob or intimidate him? Why

the deuce did they all stand there, shaking hands and exchanging reminiscences in his own hired salon, and take no notice at all of him, Sir Henry Wilberforce, the real proprietor and sole representative authority of that sacred apartment? It was really all most extraordinary, most irregular, most mysterious.

Sam broke the momentary silence by coming forward towards the old man, and saying in his clear, half-American tone: 'I presume I'm addressing Sir Henry Wilberforce?'

Sir Henry nodded. A Yankee, clearly. And yet he gave his name as Churchill, and wanted no doubt to represent himself as the other Churchill's brother!

'Well,' Sam went on (and Gwen could not help but wait and listen), 'I've come to see you about my brother. I asked for him from the person in the white choker——'

'Agostino,' Sir Henry murmured feebly.

'But he said, as far as I could make out

his lingo, that my brother was gone out. So I just thought the best thing, under the circumstances, would be to come in and speak to you.'

'And may I ask,' Sir Henry inquired, still fingering the back of the chair in a nervous manner, 'who your brother may be, and what the devil I have got to do with him?'

'Oh, his name's Churchill,' Sam answered, with some little confusion, glancing over towards Gwen, who stood listening, half-amused and half-embarrassed. 'Colin Churchill. That's my card, you see, colonel——'

Sir Henry took it and looked at it languidly. 'I see,' he said. 'You are—ahem—my valet's brother.'

Sam flushed a little angrily. 'That's the very business I've come here about,' he said, looking as though he would like to knock down the feeble supercilious old Pantaloon who stood there quavering and shivering before him. 'My brother being determined

to come to Rome to be a sculptor, and not having the means to come with of his own, you see, colonel——'

'My precise military rank, if any, must be a matter of absolute indifference to you, sir,' Sir Henry interrupted coolly.

'Well, he didn't apply to his family for the means to do so, as he might have done,' Sam went on, without noticing the interruption, 'but chose to take a place, quite beneath his natural position, as *your* valet, Sir Henry Wilberforce. I happened to come to England at the time from America, where I've been residing for some years, and learnt on inquiry that he had taken this very foolish step; so I followed him at once to Rome, to release him from such an unwise arrangement, if possible, and to make things pleasant all round, as between the whole lot of us. I ain't sorry that Colin's gone out, for it enables us to clear off the whole thing right away, without telling

him anything about it. What I propose, Sir Henry Wilberforce,'—Sam repeated the full name each time a little viciously, with some adopted republican aversion—'is just this: I'll telegraph to London to the Couriers' Society to get you a suitable person sent out here to replace him. If you like, I'll get you a selection sent out on approval, and I'll pay their expenses; we don't want to put you to any inconvenience, you understand, Sir Henry Wilberforce. But what we stick at is only one point—my brother Colin can't stop here with you another minute; that's certain. He's got to leave right away, and go straight off to his own business.'

Sir Henry Wilberforce wrung his hands in helpless despair at this inexplicable inroad of so many aggressive strangers. 'Upon my word,' he said piteously, 'I wish to goodness I'd never seen or heard at all of this extraordinary young man Churchill. Such a deuce

of a hullabaloo and corroboree as they're kicking up about him, the whole three of them, I never heard in all my confounded lifetime. Dash their geniuses! Who the dickens wants a genius for a valet? I'll take precious good care, when once I'm out of this deuced hobble, that I never engage a fellow who's been first cousin to a marble-cutter as my servant in future. First this young lady comes down upon me and lectures me in the name of high art, what the devil do I mean by keeping this delightful young sculptor pottering about as my own body-servant. And then this pair of Yankees come down upon me, in the name of brotherly affection, and ask me what the devil do I mean by keeping this eminently respectable brother of theirs in a menial position that I never for a moment wanted him to get into.—Why, what the devil do you mean yourself, sir, by invading my premises in this unceremonious

manner? Who the devil cares twopence about you or your brother? If your brother's a sculptor, why the devil doesn't he stick to his own profession? What the devil does he mean by coming and passing himself off upon me as a servant? Will you have the kindness, all of you, to leave my rooms at your earliest convenience, and be dashed to you? And will you tell this interesting young sculptor, if you see him, that he may pack up his traps and clear out as soon as possible? That'll do, thank you. Good morning. Good morning.' And Sir Henry stood with the door in his hand, waiting for the three to take their departure.

That same evening, when Sir Henry came in from dinner much agitated, he found an envelope lying on his table, which he took up and opened in a surly fashion, saying to himself meanwhile: 'Some deuced impertinence of that fellow Churchill, I'll be bound—the confounded rascal.' But it contained only a couple of English bank-notes; a small

memorandum of Colin's railway expenses and other disbursements made by Sir Henry on his account, as well as of the month's wages, due by a servant who voluntarily leaves his master without full notice; and finally a sheet of white note-paper, bearing the words, 'With Saml. Churchill's compliments.'

Sir Henry crumpled up the paper and memorandum angrily, with hardly a glance, and flung them into the empty grate; but he folded the notes carefully, and put them into the inner compartment of his purse. Then he sat down at his davenport and wrote out a telegram from Wilberforce, Rome, to Dobbs, 74 Albert Terrace, Dalston, London. 'Come here at once; expenses paid; wages raised five pounds; no boots thrown. Answer immediately. W.'

'And if ever I have anything to do again with these confounded marble-cutters and sculptors,' he soliloquised vehemently, 'why, my name isn't Henry Wilberforce.'

CHAPTER XX.

THE STRANDS CONVERGE.

COLIN and Hiram slept that night under the same roof, at Audouin's hotel. The wheel of Fate had at last brought the two young enthusiasts together, and they fraternised at once by mere dint of the similarity of their tastes and natural circumstances. Their lives had been so like—and yet so unlike; their fortunes had been so much the same—and yet so different. It was pleasant to compare notes with one another in the smoking-room about Wootton Mandeville and Geauga County, about the deacon and the vicar, Cicolari and Audouin; all things on earth, save only Gwen and Minna. Even Hiram didn't care to speak

about Gwen. Young men in America are generally far more frank with one another about their love affairs than we sober, suspicious, unromantic English ; they talk among themselves enthusiastically about their sweet-hearts, much as girls talk together in confidence in England. But Hiram in this respect was not American. His self-contained, self-restraining nature forbade him to hint a word even of the interest he felt in the beautiful stranger he had so oddly recognised in Sir Henry's salon.

But he would meet her again--that was something ! He knew her name now, and all about her. As they left Sir Henry's hotel together, Gwen had turned with one of her gracious smiles to Sam, flooding his soul with her eyes, and said in that delicious trilling voice of hers : ' I can't forbear to tell you, Mr. Churchill, that I'd been to see Sir Henry, as he hinted to you, on the very self-same errand

as yourself, almost. I met your brother in the train coming here, and I learnt from him accidentally what he'd come for, and how he was coming; and I couldn't resist going to tell that horrid old man the whole story. It was so delightful, you know, so very romantic. Of course I thought he'd be only too delighted to hear it, and admire your brother's pluck and resolution so much, exactly as I did. I thought he'd say at once "A sculptor! How magnificent! Then he shan't stay here with me another minute. I'm a lover of art myself. I know what it must be to feel that divine yearning within one," or something of that sort. "I won't allow a born artist to waste another moment of his precious time upon such useless and unworthy occupations. Let him go immediately and study his noble profession; I'll use all my interest to get him the best introductions to the very first masters in all Italy." That's what a man of any heart

or spirit would have said on the spur of the moment. Instead of that, the horrid old creature put up his eyeglass and stared at me so that I was frightened to death, and swore dreadfully, and said your brother oughtn't to have engaged himself under the circumstances; and used such shocking language, that I was just going to leave the room in a perfect state of terror when you came in and detained me for a minute. And then you saw yourself the dreadful rage he got into—the old wretch! I should like to see him put into prison or something. I've no patience with him.'

Hiram felt in his own soul at that moment a certain fierce demon rising up within him, and goading him on to some desperate vengeance. Was he alone the only man that Gwen didn't seem to notice or care for in any way? She was so cordial to Audouin, she was so cordial to Sam, and now she was so interested in Sam's unknown brother, whom she had

only met casually in a railway carriage, that she had actually faced, alone and undaunted, this savage old curmudgeon of a British nobleman (Hiram's views as to the status of English baronets were as vague as those of the Tichborne Claimant's admirers), in order to release him from the necessary consequences of an unpleasant arrangement. But him, Hiram, she had utterly forgotten; and even when reminded of him, she only seemed to remember his personality in a very humiliating fashion as a sort of unimportant pendant or corollary to that brilliant Mr. Audouin. To him, she was all the world of woman; to her, he was evidently nothing more than an uninteresting young man, who happened to accompany that delightfully clever American whom she met at the Thousand Islands!

How little we all of us are to some people who are so very, very much to us!

But when she was leaving them at the

door of her own hotel, Gwen handed Hiram a card with a smile that made amends for everything, and said so brightly: 'I hope we may see you again, Mr. Winthrop. I haven't forgotten your delightful picture. I'm so fond of everything at all artistic. And how nice it is, too, that you've got that charming Mr. Audouin still with you. You must be sure to bring him to see us here, or rather, I must send papa to call upon you. And, Mr. Churchill, as soon as your brother sets up a studio—I suppose he will now—we won't forget to drop in and see him at it. I'm so very much interested in anything like sculpture.'

Poor Hiram's heart sank again like a barometer to Very Stormy. She only wanted to see him again, then, because he'd got Audouin with him! Hiram was too profoundly loyal to feel angry, even in his own heart, with his best friend and benefactor; but he couldn't

help feeling terribly grieved and saddened and downcast, as he walked along silently the rest of the way through those novel crowded streets of Rome towards the Hôtel de Russie. He felt sure he should cordially hate this horrid, interesting, interloping fellow, Sam's brother.

Sam had left a little note at the Allemagne to be given to Mr. Colin Churchill—Sir Henry's valet—as soon as ever he came back. In the note he told Colin he was to call round at once, without speaking to Sir Henry, for a very particular purpose, at the Hôtel de Russie. The letter was duly signed: 'Your affectionate brother, Sam Churchill.' Colin took it up and looked at it again and again. Yes, there was no denying it; it was Sam's handwriting. But how on earth had Sam got to Rome, and what on earth was Sam doing there? It was certainly all most mysterious. Still, the words 'without speaking to that old fool Sir Henry'

were trebly underlined, and Colin felt sure there must be some sufficient reason for them, especially as the arrangement of epithets was at once so correct and so forcible. So he turned hastily to the Hôtel de Russie, filled with amazement at this singular adventure.

In Colin's mind, the Sam of his boyish memory was a Dorsetshire labourer clad in Dorsetshire country clothes, a trifle loutish (if the truth must be told), and with the easy, slouching, lounging gait of the ordinary English agricultural workman. When he called at the Russie, he was ushered up into a room where he saw three men sitting on a red velvet sofa, all alike American in face, dress, and action, and all alike, at first sight, complete strangers to him. When one of the three, a tall, handsome, middle-aged man, with a long brown moustache, and a faultless New Yorker tourist suit, rose hastily from the sofa, and came forward to greet him with a cry of

‘Colin!’ he could hardly make his eyes believe there was any trace of the original Sam about this flourishing and eminently respectable American citizen.

‘Well, Colin,’ his brother said kindly, but with such an unexpected Yankee accent, ‘I surmise you ain’t likely to recognise me, anyhow; that’s so, ain’t it? You were only such a little chap when I first went away across the millpond.’

When one sees a member of one’s own family after a separation of many years, one judges of him as one judges of a stranger; and Colin was certainly pleased with the first glimpse of this resurrected and wholly transfigured Sam—he seemed such a good-humoured, easy-going, kindly-confidential sort of fellow, that Colin’s heart warmed to him immediately. They fell to talking at once about old times at Wootton Mandeville, and Sam told Colin the whole story of how he came to cross the

Atlantic again, and what reception he had met with that morning from Sir Henry Wilberforce. Hiram and Audouin went out while the two brothers discussed their family affairs and future prospects, ostensibly to see something of the sights of Rome, but really to let them have their talk out in peace and quietness.

‘And now, Colin,’ Sam said in a blunt, straightforward, friendly fashion, ‘of course you mustn’t see this Wilberforce man again, whatever happens. It’s no use exposing yourself to a scene with him, all for nothing. You’ve just got to go back to the Hôtel d’Allain on the quiet, pack up your things without saying a word to him, and walk it. I’ve written a note to him that’ll settle everything, and I’ve put in two bills.’

‘Two what?’ Colin asked doubtfully.

‘Bills,’ Sam repeated with a hasty emphasis. ‘Notes I think you call ’em in England; bank-notes to cover all expenses of

your journey, don't you see, and baggage, and so forth. No, never you mind thanking me like that about a trifle, Colin, but just sit there quietly like a sensible fellow and listen to what I've got to say to you. It's a long time since I left the old country, you know, my boy; and I've kind o' forgotten a good deal about it. I've forgotten that you were likely to be so hard up for money as you were, Colin, or else I'd have sent you over a few hundred dollars long ago to pay your expenses. When you wrote to me that you were working with a sculptor in London, I took it for granted, anyhow, that you were making a pretty tidy thing out of it; and when you wrote that you were going to Rome to continue your studies, I thought I'd bring Hiram Winthrop along just to keep you company. But I never imagined you'd come over as I find you have done. Why, when that Sickolary man told me you'd gone as a valet, I was so ashamed I

couldn't look Mr. Audouin straight in the face again for half-an-hour. And what I want to know now's just this, Who's the very best sculptor, should you say, in all Rome, this very minute?'

'There's only one really great sculptor in Rome at all, at present, that I know of,' Colin answered without a moment's hesitation. 'Nicola Maragliano.'

'Well,' Sam continued in a business-like fashion; 'I suppose he takes pupils?'

'I should doubt it very much, Sam, unless they were very specially recommended.'

'What, really? At least, we'll try, Colin. We'll see what Mr. Maragliano's terms are, any way.'

'But, my dear fellow, whatever his terms are, I can't afford them. I must work for my livelihood one way or another.'

'Nonsense,' Sam answered energetically. 'You just leave this business alone. I've got

to manage it my own way, and don't you go and interfere with it. I pay, you work; do you see, Colin?'

Colin looked back at his brother with a look half incredulity, half pride. 'Oh, Sam,' he said, 'I can't let you. I really can't let you. You mustn't do it. It's too kind of you, too kind of you altogether.'

'In America,' Sam answered, taking a cigar from his pocket and lighting a vesuvian, 'we're a busy people. We haven't got time for thanks and that sort of thing, Colin; we just take what we get, and say nothing about it. I'm going out now, to have a look after one of their Vaticans, or Colosseums, or triumphal arches, or something; you'd better go and pack up your traps meanwhile at this Wilberforce creature's. You'll sleep here tonight; I'll bespeak a room for you; then you and Hiram can talk things over and arrange all comfortable. They have dinner here at

the wrong end of the day—seven o'clock; mind you're back for it. Now, good-bye for the present. I'm off to hunt up some of these ancient Roman ruins.'

Sam put on his hat before Colin could thank him any further, and in half an hour more, he was meditating, with the aid of his cigar, among the big gloomy arches of the Colosseum.

So Colin took the proffered freedom, with an apologetic note to poor old Sir Henry, whom he didn't wish to treat badly; and that evening he and Hiram met to make one another's acquaintance in earnest. Hiram's spleen against the young Englishman who had had the audacity to attract Gwen's favourable attention didn't long outlast their introduction. To say the truth, both young men were too simple and too transparent not to take a sincere liking for one another almost immediately. Sam and Audouin were both delighted

at the success of their scheme for bringing them together; and Sam was really very proud of his brother's drawings and designs which Colin brought down for their inspection after dinner. He had enough of Colin's leaven in him to be able at least to recognise a true and beautiful work of art when it was set before him.

'I shall just wait a bit here in Rome so as to fix up Colin with this man Maragliano, Mr. Audouin,' Sam said, after the two younger men had retired, as they sat talking over the prospect in the billiard-room of the hotel; 'and then I shall run back to England to pay a visit to the old folk, before I return to work at Syracuse.'

'And I,' said Audouin, 'will stop the winter so as to set Hiram fairly on the right way, and let him get free play for his natural talents. He's going to be the greatest American painter ever started, Mr. Churchill;

and I'm going to see that he has room and scope to work in.'

But all that night, Hiram dreamt of Chattawauga Lake, and Gwen, and the Thousand Islands, and the green fields he had seen in England. And when he woke to look out on the broad sunshine flooding the neighbourhood of the Piazza del Popolo, his heart was sad within him.

CHAPTER XXI.

COLIN SETTLES HIMSELF.

AFTER breakfast next morning, Sam rose resolutely from the table, like a man who means business, and said to his brother in a tone of authority, 'Come along, Colin; I'm going to call on this Mr. Maragliano you were telling me about.'

'But, Sam,' Colin expostulated, 'he won't receive us. We haven't got any introduction or anything.'

'Not got any introduction? Yes, I guess we have, Colin. Just you bring along those drawings and designs you showed us last night, and you bet Mr. Maragliano won't want any other introduction, I promise you. In

America, we'd rather see what a man can do, any day, than what all his friends put together can say to crack him up in a letter of recommendation.'

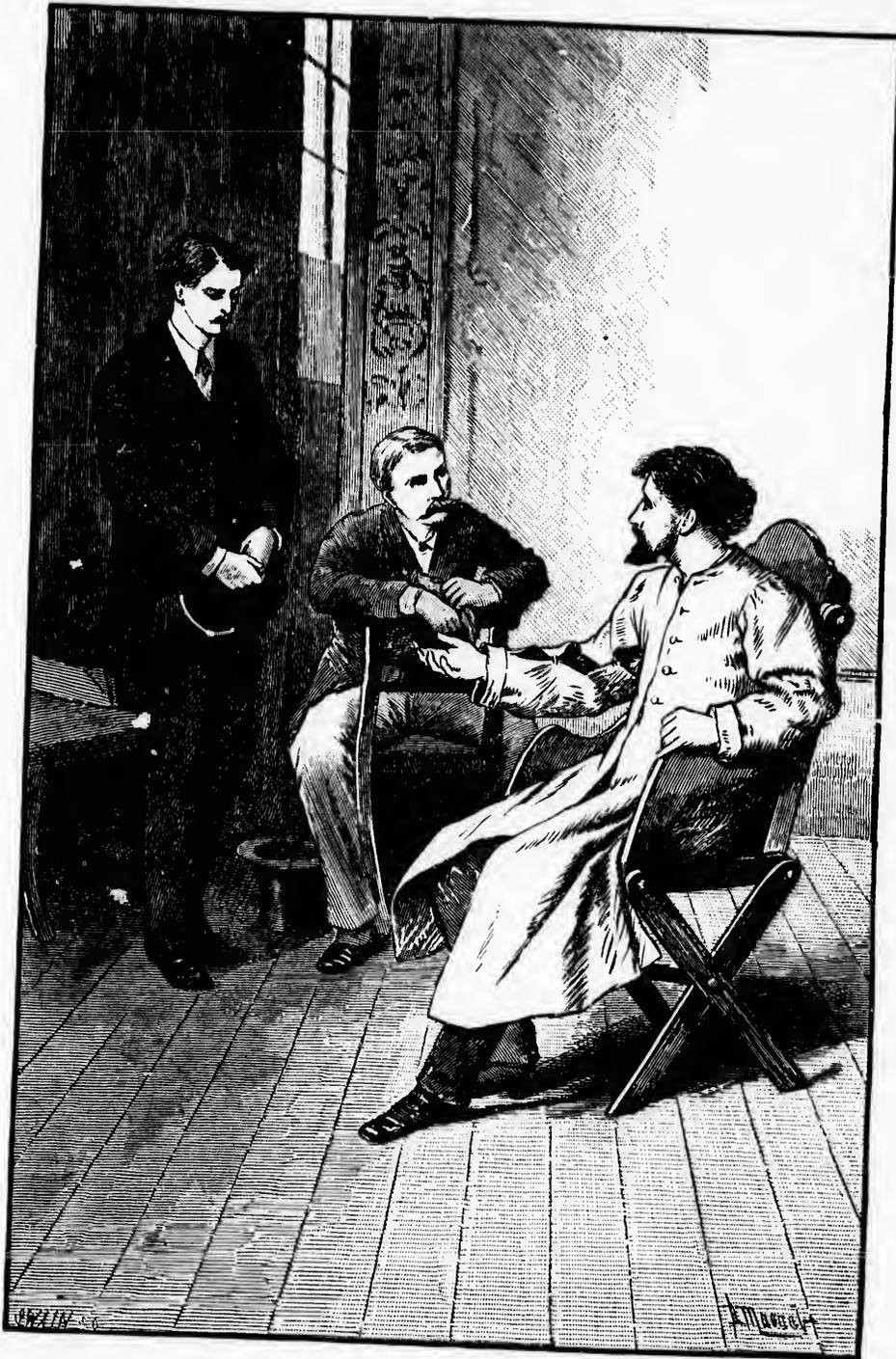
Colin ran upstairs trembling with excitement, and brought down the big portfolio—Minna's portfolio, made with cloth and cardboard by her own small fingers, and containing all his most precious sketches for statues or bas-reliefs. They turned out into the new Rome of the English quarter, and following the directions of the porter, they plunged at last into the narrow alleys down by the Tiber till they came to the entrance of a small and gloomy-looking street, the Via Colonna. It is the headquarters of the native Italian artists. Colin's heart beat fast when at length they stopped at a large house on the left-hand side and entered the studio of Nicola Maragliano.

The great sculptor was standing in the

midst of a group of friends and admirers, his loose coat all covered with daubs of clay, and his shaggy hair standing like a mane around him, when Sam and Colin were ushered into his studio. Colin stood still for a moment, awestruck at the great man's leonine presence; for Maragliano was one of the very few geniuses whose outer shape corresponded in majesty to the soul within him. But Sam, completely unabashed by the novelty of the situation, walked straight up to the famous artist, and said with a rapid jerk in his own natural, easy-going manner, 'Speak any English?'

'A leetle,' Maragliano answered, smiling at the brusqueness of the interrogation.

'Then what we want to know, sir, without wasting any time over it, is just this: Here's my brother. He wants to be made into a sculptor. Will you take him for a pupil, and if so, what'll your charge be? He's brought



'Colin stood still for a moment awe-struck.'

some of his drawings along, for you to look at them. Will you see them?’

Maragliano smiled again, this time showing all his white teeth, and looked with an air of much amusement at Colin. The poor fellow was blushing violently, and Maragliano saw that he was annoyed and hurt by Sam's brusqueness. So he took the portfolio with a friendly gesture (for he was a true gentleman), and proceeded to lay it down upon his little side-table. ‘Let us see,’ he said in Italian, ‘what the young American has got to show me.’

‘Not American,’ Colin answered, in Italian too. ‘I am English; but my brother has lived long in America, and has perhaps picked up American habits.’

Maragliano looked at him keenly again, nodded, and said nothing. Then he opened the portfolio and took out the first drawing. It was the design for the Cephalus and Aurora

—the new and amended version. As the great sculptor's eye fell upon the group, he started and gave a little cry of suppressed astonishment. Then he looked once more at Colin, but said nothing. Colin trembled violently. Maragliano turned over the leaf, and came to the sketch for the bas-relief of the Boar of Calydon. Again he gave a little start, and murmured to himself, 'Corpo di Bacco!' but still said nothing to the trembling aspirant. So he worked through the whole lot, examining each separate drawing carefully, and paying keener and keener attention to each as he recognised instinctively their profound merit. At last, he came to the group of Orestes and the Eumenides. It was Colin Churchill's finest drawing, and the marble group produced from it is even now one of the grandest works that ever came out of that marvellous studio. Maragliano gave a sharper and shorter little cry than ever.

‘You made it?’ he asked, turning to Colin.

Colin nodded in deep suspense, not unmixed with a certain glorious premonition of assured triumph.

Maragliano turned to the little group, that stood aloof around the clay of the Calabrian Peasant, and called out, ‘Bazzoni!’

‘Master!’

‘See this design. It is the Englishman’s. What think you of it?’

The scholar took it up and looked at it narrowly. ‘Good;’ he said shortly, in an Italian crescendo; ‘excellent—admirable—surprising—extraordinary.’

Maragliano drew his finger over the curve of the Orestes’ figure with a sort of free sweep, like a sculptor’s fancy, and answered simply, turning to Colin, ‘He says true. It is the touch of genius.’

As Maragliano said those words, Colin felt

the universe reeling wildly around him, and clutched at Sam's arm for support from falling. Sam didn't understand the Italian, but he saw from Colin's face that the tremor was excess of joy, not shock of disappointment. 'Well,' he said inquiringly to Maragliano. 'You like his drawings? You'll take him for a pupil? You'll make a sculptor of him?'

'No,' Maragliano answered in English, holding up the Orestes admiringly before him; 'I cannot do zat. Ze great God has done so already.'

Sam smiled a smile of brotherly triumph. 'I thought so, Colin,' he said approvingly. 'I told him so last night, Mr. Maragliano. You see, I'm in the artistic business myself, though in another department—the advertising block trade—and I know artistic work when I look at it.'

Maragliano showed his white teeth once more, but didn't answer.

‘And what’ll your terms be for taking him?’ Sam asked, in as business-like a fashion as if the famous sculptor had been a flourishing greengrocer, or a respectable purveyor of kippered herrings.

Maragliano glanced around him with a nervous glance. ‘Zere are many people here,’ he said, shrugging his shoulders. ‘We cannot talk at leisure. Let us go into my private chamber.’ And he led the way into a small parlour behind the studio.

Sam took a chair at once with republican promptitude, but Colin stood, his hands folded before him, still abashed by the great man’s presence. Maragliano looked at him once more with his keenly interested look. ‘That is well,’ he said in Italian. ‘Greatness always pays the highest homage to greatness. I know a true artist at sight by the way he first approaches me. Rich men condescend; pretenders fawn; ordinary men recognise no

superiority save rank or money; but greatness shows its innate reverence at once, and thereby securely earns its own recognition. Be seated, I pray you. Your drawings are wonderful; but you have studied little. They are full of genuine native power, but they lack precise artistic teaching. Where have you taken your first lessons?’

‘Nowhere,’ Colin answered, his face glowing with pleasure at Maragliano’s hearty encomium. ‘I am almost entirely self-taught, and I have come to Rome to learn better.’

Maragliano listened intently. ‘Wonderful!’ he said; ‘wonderful, truly! And yet, I could almost have guessed it. Your work is all vigour and nature—it is Greek, purely Greek—but there is not yet art in it. Tell me all about how you have learned what you know of sculpture.’

Thus invited, Colin began, and confided to the great sculptor’s sympathetic ear the

whole story of his youth and boyhood. He began with the time when he moulded little clay images for Minna from the bank at Wootton Mandeville; and he went on with all the story of his acquaintance with Cicolari, down to his coming to Rome with Sir Henry Wilberforce. Maragliano nodded his interest from time to time, and when Colin had finished, he took his hand warmly in his, and cried in English, so that Sam too understood him: 'It is well. You shall be my pupil.'

'And your terms?' Sam asked with mercantile insistence. 'We're ready to agree to anything reasonable.'

'Are nossing,' Maragliano answered; 'nossing, nossing. I will teach you for ze love of art, as you will learn for it. No, no, he went on, breaking into Italian again, as Colin tried to thank him or to expostulate with him. 'You needn't thank me. It is but the repayment of a debt. I owe it to

your own Gibson, as Gibson owed it before to Canova. It is a tradition among us Roman sculptors ; you will keep it up, and will repay it in due time hereafter to some future follower. Many years ago I came to Rome. I was an unknown lad from Genoa. I came as a model to Gibson's studio. I sat for an Antinous. Gibson saw me modelling little bits of clay for amusement in my off times, and said to me, "You would make a sculptor." I laughed. He gave me a little clay, and saw what I could do ; I modelled a head after his Venus. Then he took me on as his pupil ; and now—I am Nicola Maragliano. I am glad to repay an Englishman the debt I owe to the illustrious Gibson. You must take my lessons, as I took his, in trust for art, and not talk between brother artists about such dirt as money.'

Colin seized his hand eagerly. 'Oh, sir,' he cried in English, 'you are too noble, too

generous. I shall never be able sufficiently to thank you. If you will only condescend to give me instruction—to make me your pupil—to let me model in your studio, I shall be eternally grateful to you for such unexpected kindness.'

Maragliano wrung the young man's hand with a kindly fervour. 'That is more than enough already,' he answered. 'Those who love art are all of one family. When will you come to the studio? Let me see; you have not been long in Rome?'

'We've only just come here,' put in Sam, proud of having caught the meaning of the Italian.

'Ah, well; then you will want a little time, no doubt, to look about and see the sights of Rome. What do you say to Tuesday fortnight?'

'If it's equally convenient for you, signor,' Colin answered, all aglow, 'I shall be at the studio to-morrow morning.'

Maragliano patted him gently on the head as though he were a child. 'My friend,' he said, 'you speak courageously. That is the sentiment of all true artists. You are impatient to get to work; you will not need a long apprenticeship. Let it be so then. Tomorrow morning.'

CHAPTER XXII.

HIRAM GETS SETTLED.

‘HIRAM,’ Audouin said, as soon as Sam and Colin had left the hotel, ‘it’s time for us, I surmise, to be setting about the same errand. Before we begin to look at the sights of Rome, we must arrange where you ought to locate yourself, and when you ought to commence your artistic studies.’

Hiram looked blankly enough out of the window into the dusty piazza, and answered in a tone of some regret, ‘Well, Mr. Audouin, if you think so, I suppose it’ll be best to do it, though I can’t say I’m in any particular hurry. Where do you contemplate making inquiries?’

‘Why,’ Audouin replied in his easy confident fashion, ‘there’s only one really great painter now in Rome in whose studio I should like to put you, Hiram, and that’s Seguin.’

Hiram’s face sank. ‘Seguin,’ he echoed somewhat gloomily. ‘Ah, Seguin! But he’s a figure painter, isn’t he, surely, Mr. Audouin?’

Audouin smiled his pleasant smile of superior wisdom. ‘Well, Hiram,’ he said, ‘you don’t come to Rome to paint Chatta-wauga Lake, do you? Yes, Seguin’s a figure painter. And you’ll be a figure painter, too, my dear fellow, before you’ve finished—yes, and a great one. Seguin’s one of the finest living artists, you know, in all Europe. It’s a great honour to be admitted into the studio of such a master.’

If somebody in authority had said to Hiram Winthrop, ‘You must go to Seguin’s and paint heroic figure pictures, or have your head cut off,’ Hiram Winthrop would no

doubt have promptly responded with dogged cheerfulness, 'À sainte guillotine, donc,' or words to that effect, without a moment's hesitation. But when Lothrop Audouin, his guide and benefactor, said to him in a voice of friendly sympathy, 'You'll be a figure painter too, before you've finished, Hiram,' he no more dreamt of refusing or doubting (save in his own inmost soul) than a docile child dreams of resisting its parents in the matter of their choice of its school or its lessons. So he took his hat down from its peg, and followed Audouin blindly, out into that labyrinth of dirty lanes and ill-paved alleys which constitutes the genuine Rome of the native-born modern Romans.

Audouin led the way, through the modernised shops and gay bustle of the Corso, to a small side street, with squalid blotchy houses rising high against the sky on either hand, and a crowd of dirty ragged children loitering

in the gutter, save when an occasional rickety carriage, drawn by a tottering skinny horse, dashed round the dark corners with a sudden swoop, and scattered them right and left with loud chattering cries into the gloomy archways. All was new and strange to Hiram, and, if the truth must be told, not particularly inviting. Past the Spaccio di Vino, the squalid temple of Dionysus, where grimy Romans in grubby coatsleeves sat drinking sour red wine from ill-washed tumblers; past the tinker's shop, where some squat Etruscan figure crouched by a charcoal stove hammering hopelessly at dilapidated pannikins; past the foul green-grocery, where straw-covered flasks of rancid oil hung up untemptingly between long strings of flabby greens and mouldering balls of country cheese; past many other sights and sounds, dimly visible to Hiram's eyes or audible to his ears in the whirl and confusion of an unknown city; till at last Audouin

wheeled round the corner into the Via Colonna (where Colin had gone before), and stopped in front of a large and decently clean house, bearing on the lintel of its great oak door a little painted tin plate, 'Atelier de M. J.-B. Seguin.' Audouin turned with a smile to Hiram, poor dazzled, half-terrified Hiram, and said in a tone of some little triumph, 'There, you see, Hiram, here we are at last; in Rome, and at the great man's studio!'

And was this Rome! And was this the end of all his eager youthful aspirations! Hiram had hardly the courage to smile back in his friend's face, and assume an air of pretended cheerfulness. Already he felt in his heart that this great, squalid, sordid city was really no place for such as him. He knew he would never like it; he knew he could never succeed in it. England, beautiful, smiling England, had quite unaffectedly charmed and

delighted him. There, he could find a thousand subjects ready to his hand that would exactly suit his taste and temper. It was so rich in verdure and tillage; it was so pregnant with the literary and historical interests that were nearest and dearest to him. But Rome! the very first glimpse of it was to Hiram Winthrop a hideous disillusionment. Its dirt, its mouldiness, its gloom, its very antiquity—nay, in one word, to be quite frank, its picturesqueness itself, were all to his candid American soul unendurably ugly. He hated it from top to bottom at first sight with a deadly hatred; and he felt quite sure he should hate it cordially as long as he lived in it.

Very Philistine, of course, this feeling of dissatisfaction on Hiram Winthrop's part; but then, you know, the Americans are a nation of Philistines, and after all, no man can rise wholly superior to the influence of his lifelong

social environment. Indeed, it isn't easy even for an Englishman to take kindly just at first to the dirt and discomfort of southern European cities. He may put the best face upon the matter that he can; he may sedulously and successfully disguise his disgust lest he be accounted vulgar, narrow-minded, insular, inartistic; he may pretend to be charmed with everything, from St. Peter's to the garlic in the cookery; yet in his heart of hearts he feels distinctly that the Vatican barely outweighs the smells of the Ghetto and that the Colosseum scantily atones for the filthy alleys of the Tiberside slums that cover what was once the Campus Martius. It takes some residence to get over the initial disadvantages of an Italian city. But to an American-born, an unregenerate, not yet cosmopolitanised or Italianate American, fresh from the broad clean streets and neat white houses of American cities, the squalor

and griminess of Rome is a thing incredible and almost unutterable. Hiram gazed at it, appalled and awestruck, wondering how on earth he could ever manage to live for a year or two together in that all-pervading murky atmosphere of dust-laden malaria.

Besides, was he not a little sore and disappointed that Gwen had seen him, and had utterly forgotten him? Was he not just a trifle jealous, not only of Audouin, but also of Colin Churchill? All these things go to colour a man's opinion of towns and places quite as much as those recognised and potent refractive agents, the nature of his digestion or the state of the weather.

They were duly ushered up into M. Seguin's private room, and there the great painter, after a few minutes' delay, came to see them. He was a short, dry-looking, weazened-up little man, with a grizzled French moustache waxed at the ends, and an imperturbable air

of being remarkably well pleased with himself, both physically and mentally. Audouin took him in hand at once, as if by agreement, and did all the talking, while Hiram stood silent and confused quite in the background. Indeed, a casual observer might easily have imagined that it was Audouin who wished to be the Frenchman's pupil, and that Hiram Winthrop was merely there as a disinterested and unconcerned bystander.

'Has Monsieur got any specimens of his work with him?' M. Seguin asked Hiram at last condescendingly. 'Anything on which one might form a provisional judgment of his probable talents?'

'I've brought a few landscapes with me from America, if you would care to see them,' Hiram answered submissively.

'To see them! Not at all, Monsieur. Do I wish to look at landscapes for my part? Far from it! Let us admit that you do not

come here to me to learn landscape. The human figure—the divine human figure in all its sublime grandeur—there, Monsieur, is the goal of the highest art; there is the arena of the highest artist.’ M. Seguin brought his hand carelessly down upon the fragment of ribbon on his own left breast as he finished this final sentence, as though to imply with due delicacy of feeling that he considered the highest artist and Jean Baptiste Seguin as practically convertible expressions.

Hiram inclined his head a little, partly to hide a smile. ‘I’m afraid, Monsieur,’ he said humbly, ‘I have nothing to show you in the way of figure painting.’

‘Well, well,’ Seguin answered with a polite expansion of his two hands, ‘give yourself the trouble to come here to-morrow morning and prepare to copy a head of mine for the Salon of last year. You have seen it?—no? then this way, Messieurs, *I will show it to you!*’

The tone of exalted condescension in which he uttered those four words, 'Je vous la montrerai,' was as though he meant to afford them a glorious treat which would render them for ever after perfectly happy.

Hiram and Audouin followed the weazened-up little man into another room, where on an easel in the light stood his great Salon painting of Sardanapalus and the Egyptian Princess. As in everything that Seguin has painted, there was undoubtedly a certain meretricious beauty and force about it. The technique, indeed, was in its way absolutely perfect. The flesh tones had a satiny transparency; the draperies were arranged with exquisite skill and supreme knowledge; the touch was everywhere firm and solid: the art displayed was throughout consummate. Even the figures themselves, viewed as representing their historical namesakes, were not lacking in a certain theatrical grace and dignity.

Hiram felt instinctively that Sardanapalus was the masterpiece of a great artist, who had a marvellous hand and a profound knowledge of painting, but no soul in him; and even Audouin recognised at once that though the workmanship was as nearly perfect as the deepest study and the finest eye could possibly make it, yet there was a something still more profoundly artistic that was evidently wanting to the first conception of Seguin's masterpiece.

M. Seguin himself stood still for a minute or two with his hand on his hip, lips half parted and eye entranced, as though absorbed in contemplation of his own great work of art, and then glanced round sideways quite accidentally to see how its beauty affected the minds of the two strangers. Having furtively satisfied himself that Hiram was just then really appreciative of the clever light that fell obliquely upon Sardanapalus's dusky shoulder, and that Audouin was duly admi-

ring the exquisitely painted full round arm of the Egyptian Princess, he turned to them in front once more, like one recalled from the realms of divine art to the worky-day world of actuality, and resumed the discussion of their present business.

‘You will come then, to-morrow, Monsieur, and do me a study of the head of Sardanapalus. If by the time you have finished it, you display a talent worthy of being eulogized, I will then accept you as one of my pupils. If not—which I do not, for the rest, anticipate—you will understand, Monsieur, in that case, that it will be with the greatest regret that I shall be compelled—ah, good; you recognise the necessity laid upon an artist.—Antoine! These gentlemen—my time, the time of an artist, is very precious. Good day, Monsieur, good day to you.’

‘And if he accepts you, Hiram,’ Audouin said, when they got outside, ‘you’d better

arrange to take an apartment somewhere with young Churchill—furnished apartments suitable for art-students are cheap at Rome, they tell me—and get your meals at a trattoria. That'll make your money go farther, I estimate.'

Hiram sighed, and almost wished in his own heart that M. Seguin would have the kindness not to recognise in him a talent worthy of being evoked by so great a master. But alas, fate willed it otherwise. M. Seguin pronounced the head, though but feebly representing the mixed virile force and feminine delicacy of his own Sardanapalus, 'sufficiently well painted, as the work of a beginner;' and Hiram was forthwith duly enrolled among the great French painter's select pupils, to start work as soon as he had had a fortnight with Audouin, 'for inspecting the sights of the city.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

RECOGNITION.

'MY DEAR,' said the Colonel, as Gwen and he sat at breakfast together a few mornings later, 'now, what's your programme for to-day? An off day, I hope, for, to tell you the truth, I'm beginning to get rather tired of so much sight-seeing. Yesterday, San Clemente, wasn't it? (that place with the very extraordinary frescoes!) and the Forum, and the temple of Fortuna something-or-other, where an extortionate fellow wanted to charge me a lira for showing us nothing; Wednesday, St. Peter's, which, thank goodness, we did thoroughly and won't have to go to again in the course of our lifetimes; Tuesday—I'm sure I can't

recollect what we did on Tuesday, but I know it was somewhere very tiring. I do hope to-day's to be an off day, Gwen. Have you made any arrangements?'

'Oh yes, papa. Don't you remember? That delightful Mr. Audouin is coming to take us round to some of the studios.'

The colonel pushed his chair away from the table somewhat testily. 'The Yankee man, you mean, I suppose?' he said, with a considerable trace of acerbity in his manner. 'That fellow who kept talking so much the other day about some German of the name of Heine (I find out from Mrs. Wilmer, by the way, that this man Heine was far from being a respectable person). So you've promised to go mooning about the studios with him, have you?'

'Yes, papa, and he'll be here at ten; so please now go at once and get ready.'

The colonel grumbled a little—it was his

double privilege, as a Briton and a military man, to grumble as much as he thought necessary, on all possible occasions; but by the time Audouin arrived, he was quite ready, with his silk hat brushed up to the Bond Street pattern, and his eminently respectable kid gloves shaming Audouin's bare hands with their exquisite newness.

'How kind of you to take us, Mr. Audouin,' Gwen said, with one of her artless smiles: 'I'm really so delighted to get a chance of seeing something of the inner life of artists. And you're going to introduce us to Maragliano, too! What an honour!'

'Oh, quite so,' the colonel assented readily; 'most gratifying, certainly. A very remarkable painter, Signor Maragliano!'

'But most remarkable of all as a sculptor,' Audouin put in quickly, before Gwen had time to correct her father's well-meant

blunder. 'A magnificent figure, his Psyche: This way, Miss Russell, down the Corso.'

'Our name is Howard-Russell, Mr. Audouin, if you please—two surnames, with a dash between them,' the colonel interrupted (one can hardly expect the military mind to discriminate accurately between a dash and a hyphen). 'My ancestor, the fourth earl, who was a Howard, you know, married a Lady Mary Russell, daughter of the fifth Marquis of Marshwood—a great heiress—and took her name. That was how the Russell connection first got into the Howard family.'

'Indeed!' Audouin answered, with forced politeness. (The best bred Americans find it hard to understand our genealogical interest.) 'But the double name's a little long, isn't it, for practical purposes? In an easy-going old-world country like Europe, people can find time for so many syllables, I dare say; but I'm afraid we hurry-scurrying Americans

would kick against having to give one person two surnames every time we spoke to him, colonel.'

The colonel drew himself up rather stiffly. That any man could make light of so serious a subject as the Howard-Russell name and pedigree was an idea that had hardly before even occurred to his exalted consideration.

They walked along the Corso, and through the narrow street till they arrived at the Via Colonna. Then Audouin dived down that abode of artists, with Gwen chatting away to him gaily, and the colonel stalking beside them in solemn silence, till they reached Maragliano's studio.

As they entered, the great sculptor was standing aside behind a big lump of moist clay, where Colin Churchill was trying to set up a life-size model from the Calabrian Peasant. Colin's back was turned towards the visitors, so that he did not see them

enter; and the colonel, who merely observed a young man unknown kneading up some sticky material on a board, 'just the same as if he were a baker,' didn't for the moment recognise their late companion in the French railway carriage. But Gwen saw at once that it was Colin Churchill. Indeed, to say the truth, she expected to meet him there, for she had already heard all about his arrangement with Maragliano from Audouin; and she had cleverly angled to get Audouin to offer to take them both to Maragliano's, not without the ulterior object of starting a fresh acquaintance, under better auspices, with the interesting young English sculptor.

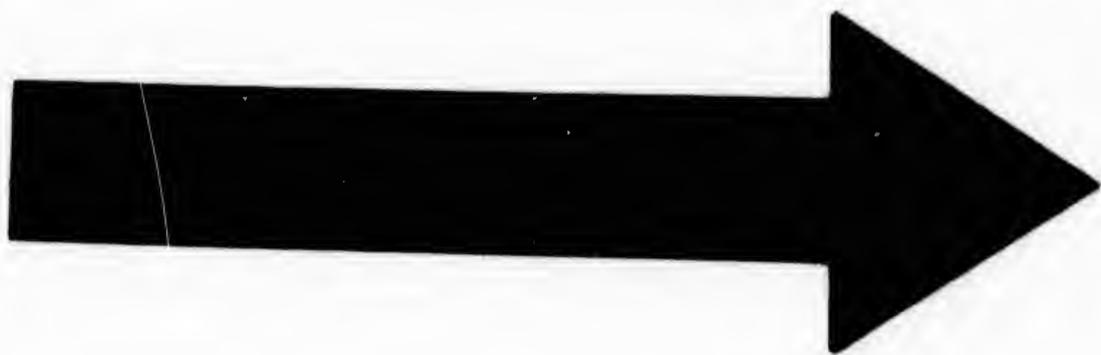
'Ah, yes,' Maragliano said to the colonel as soon as the formalities of introduction were over. 'That, signor, is my Calabrian Peasant, and that young man you see there, trying to model it, has really a most extraordinary plastic genius. He's a new pupil, and he's

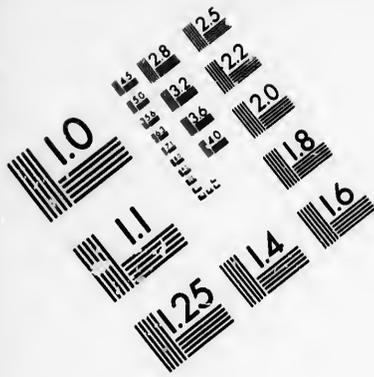
going to do wonders. But first, if you will wait and see, in ten minutes his Calabrian Peasant will come all to pieces.'

'Dear me!' exclaimed the colonel, with much show of polite interest. 'Come all to pieces! Really! How very extraordinary! And what is the object of that, now, signor?'

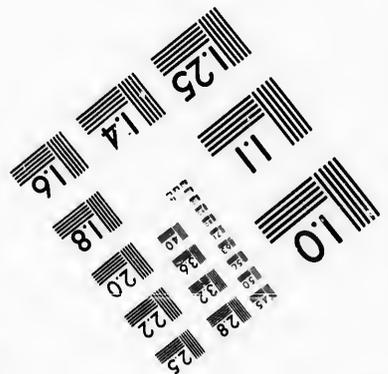
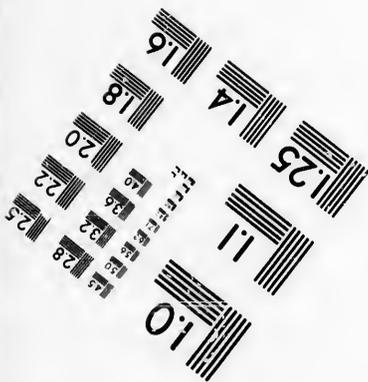
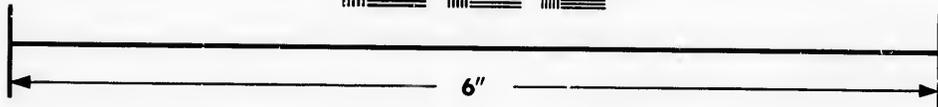
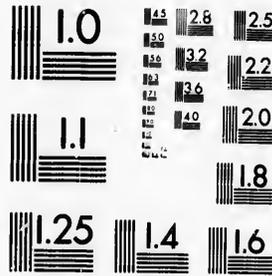
Maragliano laughed. 'He doesn't know it'll fall yet,' he answered, half whispering. 'He's quite new to this sort of work, you see, and I told him when he came the other day to begin copying the Peasant. Of course, as your knowledge of the physical laws will immediately suggest to you, signor, the arm can't possibly hold together in moist clay in that position. In fact, before long, the whole thing will collapse altogether.'

'Naturally,' the colonel answered, looking very wise, and glancing with a critical eye towards the marble original. 'That's a work,





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of course, that couldn't possibly be produced in clay, but only in bronze or marble.'

'But why did you set him to do it, then?' asked Gwen, a little doubtfully. 'Surely it wasn't kind to make him begin it if it can only end by getting broken.'

'Ah, signorina,' the great sculptor answered, shrugging his shoulders, 'we learn most of all by our errors. For a model like that, we always employ an iron framework, on which, as on a skeleton, we build up the clay into flesh and muscles. But this young compatriot of yours, though he has great native genius, is still quite ignorant of the technical ways of professional sculptors. He has evidently modelled hitherto only in his own self-taught fashion, with moist clay alone, letting it support its own weight the best way possible. So he has set to work trying to mould an outline of my Peasant, as he has been used to do with his own stiff upright

figures. By-and-by it will tumble down ; then we will send for a blacksmith ; he will fix up a mechanical skeleton with iron bars and interlacing crosses of wood and wire ; on that, my pupil will flesh out the figure with moist clay ; and then it'll be as firm as a rock for him to work upon.'

'But it seems a great shame, all the same,' Gwen cried warmly, 'to make him do it all for nothing. It looks to me like a waste of time.'

'Not so,' Maragliano answered. 'He will get on all the faster for it in the end. He's too enthusiastic now. He must learn that art goes softly.'

The colonel turned aside with Maragliano to examine some of the other works in the studio, but Gwen and Audouin went up to watch the new pupil at his futile task. Colin turned round as they approached, and felt his face grow hot as he suddenly recognised his

late beautiful fellow-traveller. But Gwen advanced to meet him so frankly, and held out her delicate hand with such an air of perfect cordiality, that he half forgot the awkwardness of the situation, and only said with a smile, 'You see my hands are not in a fit state for welcoming visitors, Miss Howard-Russell; a sculptor must be excused, you know, for having muddy fingers. But I'm so glad to see you again. I learnt from my brother how kindly you had interested yourself on my behalf with Sir Henry Wilberforce. It was very good of you, and I shall not forget the trouble you took for me.'

Gwen coloured a little. Now that she looked back upon it in a calmer moment, her interference in Colin Churchill's favour had certainly been most dreadfully unconventional. 'I'm only too glad, Mr. Churchill,' she said, 'that you've got away at last from that horrid old man. He almost frightened me out of my

senses. You ought to be here working, as you're doing now, of course, and I shall watch your progress in future with so much interest. Signor Maragliano has such a high opinion of you. He says you'll do wonders.'

'Yes,' Colin answered, eagerly. 'He's a splendid man, Maragliano. It's grand to hear his generous appreciation of others, down even to the merest beginners. Whenever he talks of any other sculptor, dead or living, there's such a noble absence of any jealousy or petty reserve about his approbation. He seems as if he could never say enough in praise of anybody.'

'He looks it,' Audouin put in. 'He has a fine head and a speaking eye. I've seldom seen a grander bust and profile. Don't you think so, Miss Russell?'

'Very fine indeed,' Gwen answered. 'And so you're working at this Calabrian Peasant, Mr. Churchill. It's a beautiful piece of sculpture.'

‘Oh, yes,’ Colin said, standing still and regarding it for a moment with loving attention. ‘It’s beautiful, beautiful. When I can model a figure like that, I shall think I’ve done something really. But it’s quite painful to me to look round and see the other men here—some of them younger than myself—to watch their power and experience, their masterly way of sketching in the figure, their admirable imitation of nature—and then to think how very little I myself have yet accomplished. It almost makes one feel despondent for one’s own powers. When I watch them, I feel humbled and unhappy.’

‘No, no,’ Audouin said warmly. ‘You needn’t think so, I’m sure, Churchill. The man who distrusts his own work is always the truest workman. It’s only fools or poor creatures who are satisfied with their own first tentative efforts. The true artist underrates himself, especially at first, and

thereby both proves himself and makes himself the true artist.'

'Just what I felt myself,' Gwen murmured, half inaudibly (though somebody standing in the shade behind heard her quite distinctly), 'only I don't know how to put it nearly so cleverly.'

'And Maragliano tells me,' Audouin went on, 'that you've got some splendid designs for bas-reliefs with you, which were what really determined him to take you for his pupil. He says they're the finest things he ever yet saw done by a self-taught beginner, and that they display extraordinary promise.'

'Oh, do show them to us, Mr. Churchill,' Gwen cried, looking at him with obvious admiration (as the somebody behind again noticed). 'Have you got them here? Do show them to us!'

Colin smiled and looked a little embarrassed. Then he went off and got his portfolio.

and showed the drawings one after another to Gwen and Audouin. Gwen watched them all with deep interest; Audouin praised and criticised and threw in a word or two here and there of transcendental explanation; while Colin himself now and then pointed out a motive or described his idea of the various personages. When they came to Orestes and the Eumenides, Colin held out the drawing at arm's length for a moment lovingly. 'Maragliano admired that the most,' he said with a touch of not ungraceful vanity; and Gwen, looking at it with her untutored eye, at once agreed that Maragliano had chosen wisely. 'It's beautiful,' she said, 'very beautiful. Oh, Mr. Churchill, what a splendid thing to be able to make such lovely figures! I don't think even painting can compare for a moment for nobility and purity with sculpture.'

Somebody standing beside in the shade—he was by trade a painter—felt a stab in his

heart as the beautiful Englishwoman said those simple natural words of outspoken admiration.

‘But, oh, Miss Russell,’ Colin cried, looking up again from his own drawings to the Calabrian Peasant, in its exquisite grace of attitude, ‘what’s the use of looking at my poor things with such a statue as that before you?’

Gwen glanced quickly and appreciatively from one to the other. ‘Why, do you know, Mr. Churchill,’ she answered, with that easy boldness of criticism which distinguishes her sex, ‘it may be only my ignorance of art that makes me say so, but I really prefer your Orestes even to Maragliano’s Calabrian Peasant; and yet the Peasant’s a magnificent statue.’

Somebody behind, putting his head a little on one side, and comparing hastily the drawing and the marble figure, confessed to his

own heart, with a painful sinking sense of personal failure, that after all Gwen's judgment in the matter was not far wrong even to the more trained artistic perception.

Colin laughed. 'Ah, that's flattery, I'm afraid,' he said, turning round to her innocently; 'quite too obvious and undeserved flattery. It'd be absurd to compare my poor little drawings of course with the finished work of such an accomplished sculptor as Maragliano. You must be given to paying compliments I'm sure, Miss Russell.'

Gwen thought the conversation was taking perhaps a rather dangerous turn, so she only said, 'Oh no,' a little coldly, and then changed the subject as quickly as she was able. 'So you're going to settle down in Rome for the present?' she said. 'You've taken lodgings, I suppose, have you?'

'Oh yes, I've taken lodgings in such a funny little street—to dine at a trattoria—

with a friend of Mr. Audouin's, who's come from America to study painting. You've met him before. He's here this morning. He came round with me to see the studio, and I'm sure I don't know now where he's gone to. Winthrop, Winthrop, where are you ?'

Hiram Winthrop stepped out of the gloom behind with bashful eyes and cheeks burning ; for he had heard all that Gwen had said to Colin, and he felt as if his own hopes and aspirations were all that moment finally crushed out of him. How much notice she took of this fluent, handsome English sculptor ! how little she seemed to think of him, the poor shy, retiring, awkward, shock-headed American painter !

But Gwen didn't seem to be at all conscious of Hiram's embarrassment. She held out her hand to him just as cordially as she had held it out five minutes before to Colin ; and Hiram, luckier in the matter of clay, was

able to take it, and to feel its touch thrill through him inwardly with a delicious tremor. She talked to him about the ordinary polite nothings for a minute or two—had he done the Vatican yet? was he going to the Colosseum? did he like Rome as far as he had seen it?—and then Maragliano and the colonel drew a little nearer to the group, still talking to one another quite confidentially.

‘Ah, yes,’ Maragliano was saying, in a somewhat lower tone than before; ‘a very remarkable pupil indeed, signor. If I were inclined to jealousy, I should say, a pupil who will soon outstrip his master. He will be a great sculptor—a very great sculptor. You will hear of his name one day; he will not be long in achieving celebrity.’

‘Ah, indeed,’ the colonel answered, in his set tone of polite indifference. ‘Very interesting, really. And what might the young man’s name be, signor? so that one

may recognise it, you know, when it comes to be worth hearing.'

Before Maragliano could reply, there was a noise of something falling behind, and then, with a sodden sound, like dough flung down upon a board, Colin Churchill's Calabrian Peasant collapsed utterly, and sank of its own weight upon the low table where he was modelling it. There it lay in a ludicrously drunken and inglorious attitude, still presenting some outer semblance of humanity, but flattened and distorted into a grotesque caricature of the original statue. As it lay there helpless, a perfect Guy Fawkes of a Calabrian, with its pasty featureless face staring blankly upward towards the vacant ceiling, Gwen couldn't resist bursting out gaily into a genuine laugh of girlish amusement. Everybody else laughed, except two: and those two stood with burning faces beside the shattered model, glaring at one another indignantly and de-

fiantly. Colin Churchill's cheeks were flushed with natural shame at this absurd collapse of his carefully moulded figure before the eyes of so many spectators. The colonel's were flushed with anger and horror when he saw that the promising pupil with whom his daughter had been talking so eagerly was none other than their railway acquaintance of the journey Romeward—Sir Henry Wilberforce's valet, Colin Churchill.

'Gwen,' he cried, coming up to her with ill-concealed anger, 'I think we'd better be going. I'm afraid—I'm afraid our presence has possibly contributed to this very unfortunate catastrophe. Good morning, Mr. Churchill. I didn't know we were to have the pleasure of meeting you here this morning. Good morning.'

But Gwen wouldn't be dragged away so easily. 'Wait a minute or two, papa,' she cried in her authoritative way. 'Signor

Maragliano will explain all this, and we'll go as soon as Mr. Churchill is ready to say good-bye to us. At present, you see, he's too busy with his model to pay any attention to stray visitors. I'm so sorry, Mr. Winthrop, it should have occurred while we were here, because I take so much interest in Mr. Churchill, and now I'm afraid he'll think we were all in league to raise a laugh against him. But I couldn't help it, you know; I really couldn't help it; the thing does certainly look so very comical.'

Hiram hated himself for it in his heart, but he couldn't help feeling a certain sense of internal triumph in spite of himself at this unexpected discomfiture of his supposed rival.

When they were walking home together a few minutes later, and had passed from the narrow street into an empty sleepy-looking piazza, the colonel turned and said angrily

to his daughter, 'Gwen, I'm thoroughly ashamed of you, going and talking in that way to that common valet fellow. Have you no feeling for your position that you choose to lower yourself by actually paying court before my very eyes to a person in his station?'

Gwen bit her lip in silence for a minute or two, and made no reply. Then, after letting her internal indignation cool for a while, she condescended to use the one mean Philistine argument which she thought at all likely to have any effect upon the colonel's personality. 'Papa,' she said very quietly, 'it's no use telling *you*, of course, that he's a wonderful artist, and that he's going to make beautiful statues that everybody'll admire and talk about, for you don't understand art, and you don't care for it or see anything in it: but can't you at least understand that Mr. Churchill is a gentleman by nature, that he's rising to

be a gentleman by position, that he'll come at last to be a great sculptor, and be made President of the Royal Academy, and be knighted, and entertain the Prince of Wales to dinner—and then, you know, you'd be glad enough to get an invitation anywhere to meet him.'

The colonel coughed. 'It'll be quite time to consider that question,' he said drily, 'when we see him duly gazetted. Every French soldier carries a marshal's bâton in his knapsack, I've been given to understand; but for my part, I prefer not sitting down to dinner with him, all the same, until the marshal's bâton has been properly taken out of the knapsack.'

That night, Hiram Winthrop, creeping up the dim creaking staircase to his small dark bedroom in the narrow dirty Roman lane, said to himself, with something of despair in his soul, 'She will fall in love with Churchill. I

feel sure she will fall in love with Churchill. And yet he doesn't seem to notice it, or care for it. While I——'

That night, Colin Churchill, coming back, once more enthusiastic, from Maragliano's, (where the great sculptor had with his own hands rebuilt for him in outline round an iron framework the shattered Calabrian Peasant), and mounting the quaint old Roman staircase to his own funny little attic room, next door to Winthrop's, said to himself casually, in a passing idle moment, 'A beautiful girl, that Miss Howard-Russell, certainly. More statuesque than Minna, though not perhaps so really pretty. But still, very beautiful. One of the finest profiles, I think, I have ever met with. And what an interest she seems to take in art, too! So anxious to come and see Maragliano, Mr. Audouin told me. Only, she was quite too flattering, really, about Orestes pursued by the Eumenides.'

And that night, away over yonder in lonely London, little Minna read and re-read a long letter from Colin at Rome ten times over, and pressed it tenderly to her heart, and cried to herself over it, and wondered whether Colin would ever forget her, or would fall in love with one of those splendid dark-eyed treacherous-looking Italian women. And then, as of old, she lay awake and thought of Colin, and the dangers of absence, with tears in her eyes, till she cried herself to sleep at last with his open letter still pressed tight against her tremulous eager little bosom.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GWEN AND HIRAM.

EVERYBODY who went to Audouin's picnic at the Alban lake agreed that it was one of the most delightful entertainments given at Rome during the whole of that season.

The winter—Hiram and Colin's first winter in Italy—had worn away quickly enough. Hiram had gone every day, as in duty bound, to paint and be chidden at M. Seguin's studio; for Seguin was one of those exalted teachers who instruct rather by example than by precept; who seem to say perpetually to their pupils, 'See how much better I have done it or would have done it than you do;' and he never for a moment succeeded in inspiring the

very slightest respect or enthusiasm in Hiram's simple, quiet, unostentatious, straightforward American nature. Of course Hiram worked hard ; he felt he ought to work hard. Audouin expected it of him, and he would have done anything on earth to please Audouin ; but his heart was not really in it for all that, though he wouldn't for the world have acknowledged as much even to himself, and he got on far less well than many other people would have done with half his talent and half his industry. He hated the whole artifice of drapery and models, and clever arrangement of light and shade, and marvellous minuteness of technical resources, in which his French master positively revelled. He longed for the beautiful native wildness of the American woodlands, or still more, even, for the green hedgerows and parks and meadows of that enchanted England, which he had seen but in a glimpse for two days in his whole

lifetime, but in whose mellow beauty, nevertheless, his heart had immediately recognised its true fatherland. It may have been narrow and sectarian and unappreciative in Hiram ; no doubt it was ; but he couldn't for the life of him really care for Seguin's very greatest triumphs of artistic ingenuity. He recognised their extraordinary skill, he admitted their unrivalled cleverness as *tours de force* of painting, he even admired their studied grace and exquisite composition as bits of harmonious form and colour ; but he never could fall down before them in the least as works of art in the highest sense, or see in them anything more than the absolute perfection of cold, hard, dry, unspiritualised mechanical aptitude.

As for Colin, now that Sam had gone back to England, on his way home to America (Sam used the expression himself quite naturally now), he had thrown himself with the utmost

fer your into the work of Maragliano's studio, where he soon rose to the acknowledged position of the great master's most favourite pupil. The model of the Calabrian Peasant which he built up upon the blacksmith's framework was the last copy he had to do for Maragliano. As soon as it was finished, the master scanned the clay figure with his quick critical eye, and cried almost contemptuously, 'Why, this is mere child's play for such a man as you, I see, Churchill. You must do no more copying. To-morrow you shall begin modelling from the life.' Colin was well pleased indeed to go on to this new and untried work, and he made such rapid progress in it that even Maragliano himself was quite surprised, and said confidentially to Bazzoni more than once, 'The young Englishman will go far. He has the spark of genius in him, my friend; he is a born sculptor.'

It was all so different too in Rome, from

London, where Colin had been isolated, unknown, and almost friendless. There was nobody there except Cicolari—and Minna; dear little woman, he had almost omitted her—with whom he could talk on equal terms about his artistic longings and ideas and interests. But at Rome it was all so different. There was such a great society of artists! Every man's studio was open to his fellows; a lively running fire of candid criticism went on continually about every work completed or in progress. To live in such an atmosphere of art, to move amongst it and talk about it all day long, to feast his eyes upon the grand antiques and glorious Michael Angelos of the Vatican—all this was to Colin Churchill as near an approach to unmixed happiness as it is given to human beings to know in this nether world of very mixed experiences. If only he had had Minna with him! But there! Colin Churchill loved art so earnestly

and singlemindedly that for its sake he could well endure even a few years' brief absence in Rome away from poor, little, loving, sorrowing Minna.

Gwen meanwhile, in spite of the colonel, had managed to see a great deal from time to time both of Colin and of Audouin. The colonel had indeed peremptorily forbidden her in so many words to hold any further communications of any sort with either of them. Colin, he said, was a person clearly beneath her both in birth and education, while Audouin was the most incomprehensible prig of a Yankee fellow he had ever had the misfortune to set eyes upon in the whole course of his lifetime. But the colonel was one of those forcible-feeble people who are very vehement always in language, but very mild in actual fact; who threaten and bluster a great deal about what they will never do, or what they will never permit, but who do

or permit it all the same on the very next occasion when opportunity arises. The consequence was that Gwen, who was a vigorous young lady with a will of her own, never took much serious notice of the colonel when he was in one of his denunciatory humours, but went her own way peacefully, and did as she chose to do herself the very next minute.

Now, at the same hotel where the Howard-Russells were stopping there was a certain Mrs. Wilmer, a lady with two daughters (perfect sticks, Gwen called them), to whom Gwen, being herself alone and motherless, thought it well to attach herself for purposes of society. It's so convenient, you know, to have somebody by way of a chaperon who can take you about and get invitations for you. Happily Mrs. Wilmer, though herself as commonplace a village Lady Bountiful as ever distributed blankets and read good books to the mothers' meeting every Wed-

nesday, was suddenly seized at Rome, under the influence of the genius loci, with a burning desire to know something about art and artists ; and Gwen made use of this new-born fancy freely to go round the studios with Mrs. Wilmer, and of course to meet at times with Colin and Audouin.

At last April came, and Audouin, who had been getting very tired of so much city life (for his hermit love for the woods and solitude was only one half affected), began to long once more for the lonely delights of his own beloved solitary Lakeside. He would have been gone long before, indeed, had it not been for a curious feeling which for the first time in his life, he felt growing up within him—Audouin was falling in love with Gwen Howard-Russell. The very first day he ever met her by the Lake of the Thousand Islands, he had greatly admired her frank bold English beauty, and since he had seen

a little more of her at Rome, he had found himself insensibly gliding from admiration into a less philosophical and more human attitude. Yes, he had almost made up his mind that before he left Rome, he would ask Gwen whether she would do him the supreme honour of accompanying him back to America as the mistress of Lakeside.

‘Papa,’ Gwen said, one bright morning in April, ‘Mrs. Wilmer wants me to go with her to-day to a picnic at the Lago d’Albano.’

‘A picnic!’ the colonel cried severely. ‘And in the Campagna, too! My dear child, as sure as fate, you’ll all get the Roman fever.’

‘Albano isn’t in the Campagna, papa,’ Gwen answered quietly. ‘At least it’s right up ever so high among the mountains. And Mrs. Wilmer’s going to call for me at half-past eleven.’

‘Who gives the picnic?’

Gwen bit her lip. 'Mr. Audouin,' she answered shortly.

'Mr. Audouin! What, that mad Yankee man again! Then, mind, Gwen, I say you're not to go on any account.'

'But, papa, Mrs. Wilmer has accepted for me.'

'Never mind. I say, I won't allow you. Not a word more upon the subject: I won't allow you. Now, remember, I positively forbid it, and pray don't re-open the question.'

At half-past eleven, however, Gwen came down, dressed and ready. 'Papa dear,' she said, as unconcernedly as if nothing at all had been said about it, 'here's Mrs. Wilmer waiting for me outside, and I must go. I hope we shan't be back late for dinner. Good morning.'

The colonel only muttered something inarticulate as she left the room, and turned to his cigar for consolation.

‘What, you here, Mr. Churchill,’ Gwen cried, as they all met together a few minutes later at the Central Railway Station. ‘I had no idea you were to be of the party. I thought you were so perfectly wedded to art that you never took a minute’s holiday.’

‘I don’t often,’ Colin answered, smiling; ‘I have so much leeway to make up that I have to keep always at it, night and morning. But Maragliano, who’s the best and most considerate of men, when he heard that Mr. Audouin had been kind enough to invite me, insisted upon it that I must give myself a day’s recreation. Besides, you see,’ he added after a momentary pause, looking down as if by accident into Gwen’s beautiful eyes, ‘there were such very special attractions.’

Gwen made a little mock curtsey. ‘What a pretty speech!’ she said laughingly. ‘Since you’ve come to Rome, Mr. Churchill, you

seem to have picked up the Roman habit of paying compliments.'

Colin blushed, with some inward embarrassment. The fact was, Gwen had misunderstood his simple remark: he was thinking, not of her, but only of the tomb of Pompey and the old Roman Emissary. But Gwen noticed the faint crimson rising to his cheek, and said to herself, not without a touch of pardonable vanity, 'Our young sculptor isn't quite so wholly swallowed up in his art as he wants us to believe, then. He dreams already of flying high. If he flies high enough, who knows but he may be successful.'

What a handsome young fellow he was, to be sure, and what a natural gentleman! And what a contrast, too, in his easy unself-conscious manner, to that shy, awkward, gawky slip of a Yankee painter, Mr. Hiram Winthrop! Hiram! where on earth did he get the name from? It sounded for all the

world just like a fancy character out of 'Martin Chuzzlewit.'

'And you too, Mr. Winthrop! Of course we should have expected you. I don't wonder you're always about so much with Mr. Audouin. I think him, you know, the most charming talker I've ever met with.'

Hiram could have sunk into the ground with mortification at having thus always to play second fiddle to Audouin, whose grizzling hair made him seem to Gwen so much a confirmed old bachelor that she didn't think there could be any danger at all in openly speaking out her admiration for his powers as a talker.

They went by train to the station at Albano, and then drove up to the shores of the lake in carriages which Audouin had ready in waiting. Recluse and hermit as he was, when he went in for giving an entertainment, he gave it regally; and the picnic was

universally pronounced to be the most splendid success of the Roman season. After lunch they dispersed a little, as people always do at picnics (or else what would be the use of that form of reunion?) and Colin somehow found himself, he didn't quite know how, strolling with Gwen down the Galleria di Sopra, that beautiful avenue of shady evergreen oaks which leads, with innumerable lovely glimpses of the lake below, from Albano towards Castel Gandolfo. Gwen, however, knew well enough how it had all happened; for she had angled most cleverly so as to avoid the pressing attentions of Audouin, and to pair off in apparent unconsciousness with the more favoured Colin. Mrs. Wilmer, walking behind with another guest to do the proprieties, had acquiesced most heartily in this arrangement, and had even managed to promote it diligently: for did it not compel Mr. Audouin to link himself for the after-

noon to dear Lilian, and was it not well known that Mr. Audouin, though an American, was otherwise a most unexceptionable and eligible person, with quite sufficient means of his own to marry most comfortably upon? Whereas this young Mr. Churchill, though no doubt wonderfully clever, and a most estimable young man in his own way, was a person of no family, and with all his fortune still to make by his own exertions. And Mr. Audouin had really hardly a trace, after all, of that horrid American singsong.

‘Yes,’ Gwen was saying, as they reached the point of view near the Emissario: ‘Signor Maragliano told me that before many months were over, he should advise you to begin modelling a real life-size figure from the life of your own invention; for he thinks you would be only wasting your time in working much longer at mere copying or academy work. He wants to see you begin carrying out some

of your own beautiful original conceptions. And so do I too, you know: for we feel in a way, papa and I, as if we had discovered you, Mr. Churchill.—Shall we sit down here awhile, under the oak trees? This broad shade is so very delicious.'

She gave Colin her hand, to help her down the first bit of the side path to the old Roman conduit; and as she did so, she looked into his face with her lovely eyes, and smiled her thanks to him expressively. Colin took her hand and helped her gently down. 'You're very good to interest yourself so much in my work,' he said, with no trace of shyness or awkwardness in his manner. 'I shall be glad indeed when I'm able to begin producing something worthy in real earnest.'

Gwen was really very beautiful and very kind and very cordial. He never for a moment remembered with her the original disparity of their stations, as he did with so

many other grand ladies. She seemed to put him at his ease at once, and to be so frank and complimentary and even pressing. And then, her profile was magnificent, and her eyes were really splendid!

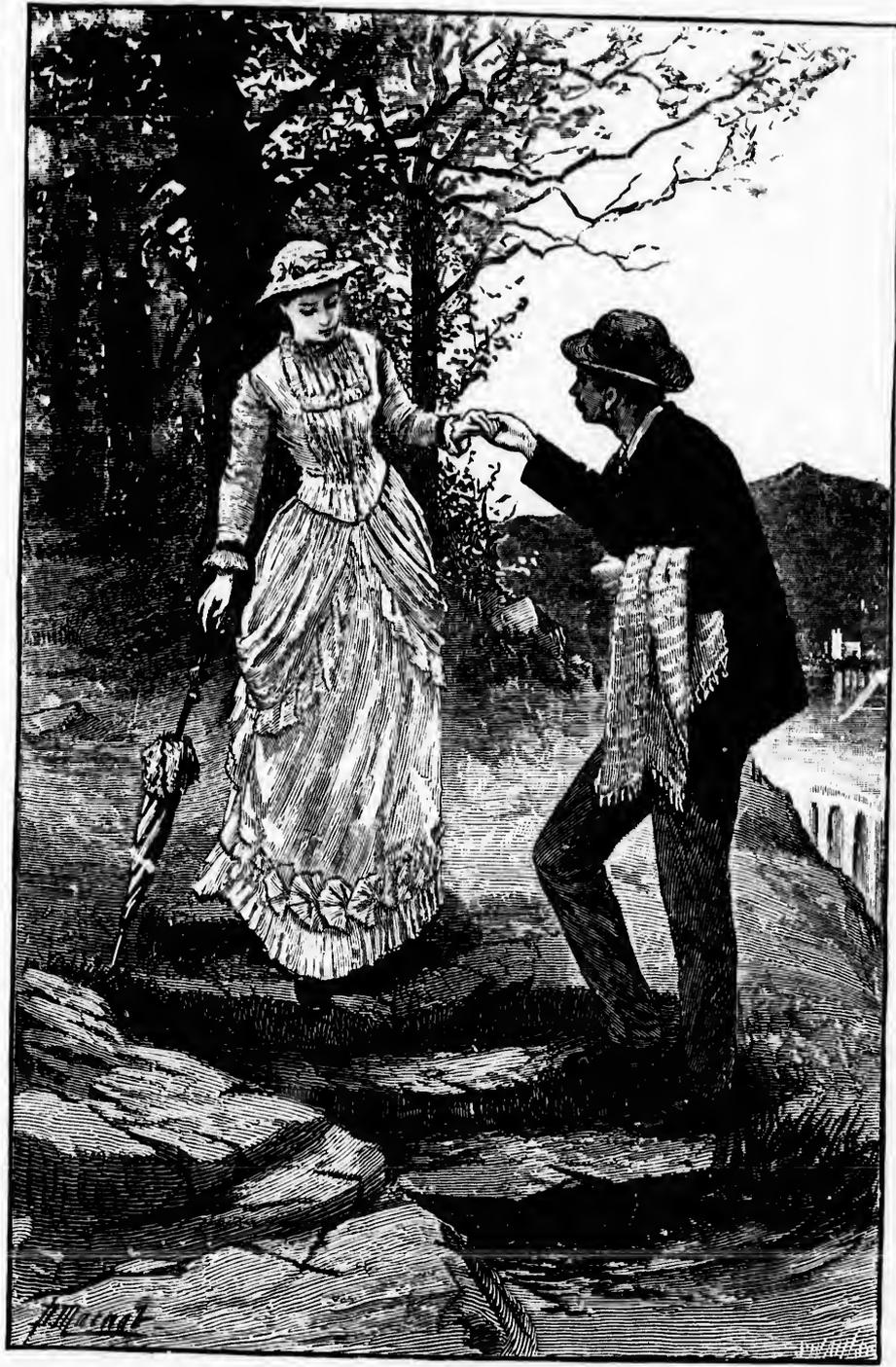
Ah, Minna, Minna, poor little Minna, in your big noisy schoolroom away over yonder in big noisy London, well may you tremble with a cold shiver running strangely through you, you know not why, and murmur to yourself, in your quaint old-world superstition, that somebody must be walking over your grave to-day somewhere or other!

‘Rome’s a perfect paradise to me, you know, Mr. Churchill,’ Gwen went on, musingly. ‘I never fully knew, before I came here, how much I loved art. I perfectly revel in the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel, and in studios such as Signor Maragliano’s. What a fortunate life yours will be—to live always among so much exquisite beauty! I should

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'Colin took her hand.'

love an artist's life myself—only I suppose I should never get beyond the most amateur water-colours. But a sculptor, especially! A sculptor's career seems to me to be the grandest thing on earth a man can live for! I'd willingly give half my days, do you know, if only I could be a sculptor.'

'It's a glorious profession, certainly,' Colin answered, with kindling eyes. 'It's such a grand thing to think one belongs, however humbly, to the same great troop as Pheidias, and Michael Angelo, and Gibson, and Thorwaldsen. That, alone, of course, is something in one's life to be really proud of.'

'Poor boy! he's obtuse,' Gwen thought to herself, commiseratingly. 'He doesn't follow up the openings one gives him. But never mind. He's very young still, and doesn't know when one's leading up to him. There's plenty of time yet. By-and-by he'll grow older and wiser.—What a beautiful reflection

down there in the water, Mr. Churchill! No, not there: on the broader part beyond the Roman mason-work. I wish Mr. Winthrop could see it. It's just the thing he'd like so much to put on paper or canvas.'

'You're interested in Winthrop, then, are you?' Colin asked innocently.

'Interested in him? Oh, yes, I'm interested in all art and in all artists—though not of course in all equally. I mean, I like sculpture even better than painting. But I saw a water-colour drawing of Mr. Winthrop's when I was in America, you know, where I first met him, which I thought very pretty. I can remember it yet—a sketch of blended trees and water among the channels of the Thousand Islands.'

'I've seen it,' Colin answered: 'he's brought it with him, as well as several other American landscapes. Winthrop draws admirably, I know, and his treatment of foliage and water seems to me quite extraordinarily

good. He'll make a fine artist, I'm quite confident, before he's done with it.'

Gwen pouted a little to herself. 'It's plain,' she thought, 'that Mr. Churchill isn't a person to be easily piqued by praising anybody else.' And must it not be candidly admitted that in most women's eyes such complete absence of jealousy is regarded rather as a fault in a man's nature than as a virtue? (Mind, fair and courteous reader, if I may for a moment address you personally, I say 'in most' not 'in all women's.' You yourself, like present company generally, always, of course, form one of the striking and praiseworthy exceptions to every vile masculine innuendo aimed at the real or supposed peculiarities of 'most women.' Indeed, it is on purpose to allow you that flattering loophole of escape that I always artfully employ the less exclusive or general expression.)

They sat for a while talking idly on the slope by the path that leads to the Emissary, till at last Audouin, having managed to shift off dear Lilian for a while upon another man of the party, strolled up as though by accident to join them. 'Do I intrude upon a *tête-à-tête*?' he asked with apparent carelessness, as he sat down upon the rocky ledge beside them. 'Is Mr. Churchill discoursing high art to you, Miss Russell, and peopling the romantic glen below with yet unhewn Egerias and Faunuses? How well this Italian scenery lends itself to those pretty half-theatrical Poussinesque embellishments! and how utterly out of place they would all look among the perfectly unkempt native savagery of our American woods and waters!'

Gwen smiled. 'We weren't discussing high art, Mr. Audouin,' she said as she drew a circle in the dust with the tip of her parasol. 'In fact we want you here to throw a little

touch of fancy and idealism into the conversation. To tell you the truth, Mr. Churchill and I were only pulling to pieces the Miss Wilmers' dresses.'

'Ah, but even dress itself is in its way a liturgy, Miss Russell,' Audbuin went on quickly, glancing half aside as he spoke at her own dainty bodice and little frill of coffee-coloured laces. (Gwen hadn't the least idea what he meant by a liturgy in this connection; but she thought it was something very beautiful and poetical to say, and she felt sure it was meant for a compliment; so she smiled graciously at it). 'People sometimes foolishly say that young ladies think a great deal too much about dress. For my part, it often occurs to me, when I look at *other* women, that they think a great deal too little of it. How rarely, after all, does one see art subservient here to nature—a beautiful woman whose dress rather expresses and accentuates

than mars or clashes with her own individual type of beauty.'

'How complimentary he is,' thought Gwen; 'and at his age too! Why, I positively believe he must be very nearly forty!'

'Shall we go down and look at the Emissary?' Colin asked, interrupting Audouin's flow of pretty sentimentalities. 'It's very old, you know, Miss Russell: one of the oldest existing works of Roman engineering anywhere in Europe.'

Audouin jumped up again, and led the way down to the Emissary, where the guide was already standing, impatiently expecting so many visitors, with the little taper in his hands which he lights and sets floating down the stream in order to exhibit to the greatest advantage the full extent of the prehistoric tunnel. 'Can't I manage to shake off this fellow Churchill somehow or other,' Audouin thought to himself in inward vexation, 'and

get half an hour's chat alone with Miss Russell? I do believe the creature'll check-mate me now, all by his ridiculous English heavy persistency! And yet, what a scholar's mate, too, to go and be shelved by such a mere hobbledehoy of a fellow as this young man Churchill!

Half way down the steep path, they came unexpectedly upon a solitary figure, sitting with colour-box open and sheet of paper before him, just above the entrance to the old tunnel. Audouin started when he saw him. 'Why, Hiram,' he cried, 'so there you are! I've been hunting everywhere for you, my dear fellow. We couldn't, any of us, imagine where on earth you had vanished.'

Hiram didn't look up in reply, and Gwen's quick eye immediately caught the reason, though she couldn't guess at its explanation—the young American painter had certainly been crying! Sitting here alone by himself,

and crying! Gwen's heart interpreted the tears at once after a true woman's fashion. He had left some little rustic sweetheart behind in America, and he didn't care to sit and chat gaily among so many other women, while she was alone without him; but had crept down here with his paint-box by himself, to make a small sketch in perfect solitude, and think about her. But who would ever have imagined that that gawky shock-headed American boy had really got so much romance in him!

'Oh, I just came down here, Mr. Audouin, to take a little view of the lake,' Hiram answered evasively, without raising his eyes. 'The bit was so pretty that, as I'd brought my things along, I couldn't resist painting it.'

'But what a shame of you,' Gwen cried, 'to run away and desert us, Mr. Winthrop. You might at least have given us the pleasure of watching you working. It's always so

delightful to see a picture growing slowly into form and shape under the hands of the artist.'

Hiram's voice had a touch of gratitude in it as he answered slowly, 'I didn't know, Miss Russell, you were likely to care about it.'

'Oh, he always loves solitude,' Audouin answered lightly, in a tone that cut Hiram to the quick. 'He doesn't care for society at all. I'm afraid, in that respect, Winthrop and I are both alike—lineal descendants of the old Red Indian. There's nothing he loves so much as to get away to a corner by himself, and commune with nature, with or without his colours, just as he's been doing now, in perfect solitude. And after all, solitude's really the best society: solitude's an excellent fellow by way of a companion. Even when we're most alone, we have, not only nature with us, but such a glorious company of glorified humanity that has gone before us. We

walk with Shelley down the autumn avenues of falling leaves, or we meditate with Pascal beside the great breakers of Homer's much-resounding sea. We look with Claude at the shifting lights and shades on the craggy hillside opposite there, or we gaze upon the clouds and the sunset with something of the halo that flooded the dying eyes of Turner. Somebody has well said somewhere, Miss Russell, that without solitude no great thing was ever yet accomplished. When the regenerators of the world—the Messiahs and the Buddhas—wish to begin their mission as seer and founder, they first retire for forty days' fast and meditation in the lonely wilderness. And yet, I begin to think that our solitude oughtn't to be too profound or too continuous. (Perhaps mine has been so.) It ought to be tempered, I fancy, by continual congenial intercourse with some one other like-minded spirit. After all, there's a profound truth of

human nature expressed in the saying of the old Hebrew cosmogonist—"It is not good that man should be alone."

'So I've always thought,' assented Colin Churchill gravely.

Audouin was vexed at the interruption, partly because he was just in the middle of one of his fluent, high-flown, transcendental periods, but still more because it came from that wretched interloper of a young English sculptor. He was just about to go on with a marked tone of continuity, when Gwen prevented him by taking up Hiram's unfinished picture. 'Why, this is beautiful!' she cried, with genuine enthusiasm. 'This is even better than the Alexandria Bay drawing, Mr. Winthrop: I like it immensely. What a lovely tint of purple on the crests of the little wavelets! and how beautifully you've done the steep sides of the old crater. Why, I do believe you ought to be a landscape painter,

instead of going in for those dreadful historical pictures that nobody cares about. What a pity you've gone into Mr. Seguin's studio! I'm sure you'd do a thousand times better at this sort of subject.'

'We've considered very carefully the best place in which to develop my friend Winthrop's unusual powers,' Audouin answered in a cold tone; 'and we've both quite come to the conclusion that there's no teacher better for him anywhere than Seguin. Seguin's a really marvellous colourist, Miss Russell, and his mastery of all the technical resources of art is something that has never yet been approached, far less equalled, in the whole history of painting.'

Hiram looked up very shyly into Gwen's face, and said quite simply, 'I'm *so* glad you like it, Miss Russell. Your appreciation is worth a great deal to me.'

'More compliments!' Gwen thought to

herself, smiling. 'They're all at it this afternoon. What on earth can be the meaning of it? My new poplin must be really awfully fetching.' But her smile was a kindly one, and poor Hiram, who hadn't much to treasure up in his soul, treasured it up sedulously for months to come among his dearest and most precious possessions.

In the end, as it happened, Audouin never got the chance of speaking alone with Gwen during the whole picnic. It was very annoying, certainly, for he had planned the little entertainment entirely for that very purpose; but really, as he reflected to himself at leisure in his own room that evening, it was after all only a postponement. 'In any case,' he thought, 'I wouldn't have insulted her by proposing to her to-day; for it *is* insulting to a woman to ask her for her hand until you can see quite clearly that she really cares for you. A human soul isn't a thing of so light

value that you can beg for the gift of it into your safe keeping on a shorter acquaintance than would warrant you in asking for the slightest favour. A woman's heart, a true and beautiful woman's heart, is a dainty musical instrument to be carefully learnt before one can play upon it rightly. To take it up by force, as it were, and to say at a venture, "Let me see whether perchance I can get a tune out of this anyhow," is to treat it with far less tenderness and ceremony than one would bestow upon an unconscious Stradivarius. So perhaps it was wisely ordained by the great blind Caprice which rules this universe of ours that she and I should not speak alone and face to face together to-day at Albano.'

But Hiram lulled himself to sleep by thinking over and over again to himself that night, 'She smiled at me, and she admired my drawing.'

CHAPTER XXV.

MINNA BETTERS HERSELF.

AWAY over in London, the winter had passed far less happily for poor little Minna than it had passed at Rome for Colin Churchill. While he had been writing home enthusiastically of the blue skies and invigorating air of that delicious Italy, the fogs in London had been settling down with even more than their customary persistency over the great grey gloomy winter city. While he had been filled with the large-hearted generosity of that noble fellow Maragliano—‘May I not be proud, Minna,’ he wrote, ‘to have known such a man, to have heard his soft Genoese accents, to have watched his wonderful chisel at its

work, to have listened to his glorious sentiments on art?'—she, poor girl, had found prim, precise, old-maidish Miss Woollacott harder to endure and more pernicketty to live with than ever. Now that Colin was gone, she had nobody to sympathise with her; nobody to whose ear she might confide those thousand petty daily personal annoyances which are to women (with all sympathetic reverence be it written) far more serious hindrances to the pursuit of happiness than the greatest misfortunes that can possibly overtake them. Worst of all, Colin, she was afraid, didn't even seem to miss her. She was so miserable in London without him; so full of grief and loneliness at his absence; while he was apparently enjoying himself in Rome quite as much without her as if she had been all the time within ten minutes' walk of his attic lodging. How perfectly happy he seemed to be in his intercourse with this

Signor Maragliano that he wrote to her about! How he revelled in the nymphs, and the Apollos, and the Niobes! How his letters positively overflowed with life and enthusiasm! She was glad of it, of course, very glad of it. It was so nice to think that dear Colin should at last be mingling in the free artistic life for which she knew he was so well fitted: should be moving about among those splendid Greek and Roman things he was so very fond of. But still . . . well, Minna did wish that there was just a *little* more trace in his letters of his being sorry to be so very, very far away from her.

Besides, what dreadful note of warning was this that sounded so ominously on Sunday mornings, when she had half an hour later to lie in bed and read over all Colin's back letters—for she kept them religiously? What dreadful note of warning was this that recurred so often?—'Miss Howard-Russell, a

niece of the old vicar's, and a cousin of Lord Beaminster's, who, I told you, came with me from Paris to Rome in the same carriage' . . . And then again, 'Miss Howard-Russell, whose name I daresay you remember'—oh, didn't she?—'came into the studio this morning, and was full of praise of my figure in the clay from the living model.' And now here once more, in to-day's letter, 'Miss Howard-Russell was at the picnic, looking very pretty,' (oh, Colin, Colin, how could you!) 'and I took her round through a beautiful gallery of oaks' (Italianism for avenue, already, but uncritical little Minna never spotted it) 'to an old Roman archway where Winthrop was painting a clever water-colour. I believe Winthrop admires her very much' (Minna fervently hoped his admiration would take a practical form :) 'but she doesn't seem at all to notice him.' Why, how closely Colin must have watched her! Minna wasn't by any means satisfied

with the habits and manners of this Miss Howard-Russell. And the insolence of the woman too! to go and be a cousin to the Earl of Beaminster! Unless you happen to have lived in the western half of Dorsetshire yourself, you can have no idea how exalted a personage a cousin of the Earl of Beaminster appeared in the eyes of the Wootton Mandeville fisherman's daughter.

'Minna Wroe,' Miss Woollacott observed in her tart voice, as the little pupil-teacher came down to breakfast on the Sunday morning after the picnic, 'you're nearly seven minutes late—six minutes and forty-nine seconds, to be precisely accurate: and I've been all that time sitting here with my hands before me waiting prayers for you. And, Minna Wroe, I've noticed that since that young man you describe as your cousin went to Rome, you've had a letter with a foreign stamp upon it every Sunday. And when

those letters arrive I observe that you're almost invariably late for breakfast. Now, Minna Wroe, I should advise you to write to your *cousin*'—with a strong emphasis of sarcastic doubt upon the last word—'asking him to make his communications a little less frequent: or else not to lie in bed quite so late in the morning reading your *cousin's* weekly effusions. Family affection's an excellent thing in its way, no doubt, but it may go a little too far in the table of affinities.'

Instead of answering, to Miss Woollacott's great surprise, poor little Minna burst suddenly into an uncontrollable flood of tears.

Now Miss Woollacott wasn't really cruel or ill-natured, but merely desiccated and fossilised, after the fashion of her kind, by the long drying-up process incidental to her unfortunate condition and unhappy calling: and moreover, she shared the common and pardonable inability of all women (I say 'all'

this time advisedly) to see another woman crying without immediately kneeling down beside her, and taking her hands in hers, and trying with all her heart to comfort and console her. So in a few minutes, what with Miss Woollacott saying 'There, there, dear, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings,' and smoothing Minna's hair tenderly with her skinny old fingers (worn to the bone in the hard struggle), and muttering to herself audibly, 'I hadn't the least idea that *that* was what was really the matter,'—Minna was soon restored to equanimity for the present at least, and Miss Woollacott, forgetting even to read prayers in her discomposure ('Which it's the only time, mum,' said Anne the slavey to the landlady, 'as ever I know'd the ole cat to miss them since fust she come here') went on with the breakfast, beaten all along the line, and trying to pass off 'this unpleasantness' by pretending to talk as unconcernedly

as possible about every distracted idea that happened to come uppermost in her poor old scantily-furnished and disconnected cranium. But when breakfast was over, and Minna had positively kissed Miss Woollacott (an unheard-of liberty), and begged her not to trouble herself any more about the matter, for she wasn't really offended, and didn't in the least mind about it, she went off upstairs to her own room alone, and sat down, and had a good cry all by herself with Colin's letters, and sent down word by Anne the slavey, that if Miss Woollacott would kindly excuse her she didn't feel equal to going to church that morning. 'And the ole cat, she acshally up and says, you'd hardly believe it, mum, says she, "Well, Anne, an' if Miss Wroe doesn't feel equal to it," says she, "I think as how she'd better lie down a bit and rest herself, poor thing," says she: and when she said it, mu n, you could 'a knocked me down with a

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'I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.'

feather, a'most, I was that took aback at the ole cat's acshally goin' and sayin' it. Which I do reely think she must be goin' to be took ill or somethin', or else what for should she go an' answer one back so kind and chrischun-like, mum, if she didn't feel her end was a comin'?'

And old Miss Wcollacott, putting on her thin-worn thread gloves for Church upon her thin-worn skinny fingers, felt softened and saddened, and remembered with a sigh that though she had never positively had a lover herself—not a declared one, that is to say—for who knows how many hearts she may have broken in silence?—she was once young herself, and fancied she might some day have one of her own, just as well as her sister Susan, who married the collector of water-rates; and if so, she was dimly conscious in her own poor old shrivelled feminine heart, much battered though it was in its hard

struggle for life till it had somewhat hardened itself on the strictest Darwinian principles in adaptation to the environment, that she too under the same circumstances would have acted very much as Minna Wroe did.

But as Minna lay on her bed alone through that Sunday morning, only for a short time disturbed by the obtrusive sympathy of Anne the slavey, she began to think to herself that it was really very dangerous after all to let Colin remain at Rome without her; and that she ought to try sooner or later to go over and join him there. And as she turned this all but impossible scheme over in her head (for if even Colin found it hard to get over to Italy, how could she, poor girl, ever expect to find the money for such a long journey, or subsistence afterwards?), a sudden glorious and brilliant possibility flashed all unexpectedly upon her bewildered mental vision:—

Why not try to go to Rome as a governess?

It was a wild and impossible idea—too impossible to be worth discussing almost—and yet, the more she thought about it, the more feasible did it seem to become to her excited imagination. Not immediately, of course: not all at once and without due preparation. Minna Wroe had learnt the ways of the world in too hard a school of slow self-education not to know already how deep you must lay your plans, and how long you must be prepared to work them, if you hope for success in any difficult earthly speculation. But she might at least make a beginning and keep her eyes open. The first thing was to get to be a governess; the next was, to look out for openings in the direction of Italy.

It seems easy enough at first sight to be a governess; the occupation is one open to any woman who knows how to spell decently, which is far from being a rare or arduous accomplishment; and yet Minna Wroe felt at

once that in her case the difficulties to be got over were practically almost insuperable. If she had only been a man, now, nobody would have asked who she was, or where she came from: they would have been satisfied with looking at her credentials and reading over the perfunctory testimonials of her pastors and masters to her deserts and merits. But as she was only a woman, they would of course want to inquire all about her; and if once they discovered that she had been in a place as a servant, it would be all up with her chances of employment for ever. The man who rises makes for himself his own position; but the woman who rises has to fight all her life long to keep down the memory of her small beginnings. That is part and parcel of our modern English Christian conception of the highest chivalry.

Little Minna Wroe, however, with her round gipsy face and pretty black eyes, was

not the sort of person to be put down in what she proposed to do by any amount of initial difficulty. If the thing was possible, she would stoutly fight her way through to it. So the very next morning, during recess time, she determined to strike while the iron was hot, and went off bravely through the rain to a neighbouring Governesses' Agency. It was one of the wretched places where some lazy hulking agent fellow, assisted by his stout wife, makes a handsome living by charging poor helpless girls ten per cent. on their paltry pittance of a first year's salary, in return for an introduction to patrons too indolent to hunt up a governess for themselves by any more humane and considerate method. These are the relatively honest and respectable agencies: the dishonest and disreputable ones make a still simpler livelihood by charging an entrance-fee beforehand, and never introducing anybody anywhere.

Minna put her name down upon the agent's list, but was wise enough not to be inveigled into paying the preliminary two-and-sixpence. The consequence was that the agent, seeing his only chance of making anything out of her lay in the result of getting her a situation, sent her from time to time due notice of persons in want of a nursery governess. Minna applied to several of these in rotation, her idea being, first to get herself started in a place anyhow, and then to look out for another in a family who were going to Italy. But as she made it a matter of principle to tell inquiring employers frankly that she had once been out at service, before she went to the North London Birkbeck Girls' School, she generally found that they, one and all, made short shrift of her. Of course it's quite impossible (and in a Christian land, too,) to let one's children be brought up by a young person who has once been a domestic servant.

One day, however, before many weeks, Minna received a note from the agency, asking her whether she could call round at half-past eleven, to see two persons who were in want of nursery governesses. It was recess-hour, luckily, so she buttoned up her neat plain cloth jacket, and put on her simple straw hat, and went round to meet the inquiring employers.

The first inquiry, the agent said, was from a clergyman—Reverend Walton and wife, now waiting in the ante-room. Reverend Walton, Miss Wroe: Miss Wroe, Reverend Walton and Mrs. Walton.

Minna bowed. The Reverend Walton (as the agent described him with official brevity), without taking the slightest notice of Minna, whispered audibly to his wife: 'This one really looks as if she'd do, Amelia. Dress perfectly respectable. No ribbons and laces and fal-lal tomfoolery. Perfectly presentable, perfectly.'

Minna coloured violently ; but the Reverend Walton's wife answered in the same stage aside : ' Quite a proper young woman as far as appearance goes, certainly, Cyril. *And* fifteen pounds a year, Mr. Coppinger said, would probably suit her.'

Minna coloured still more deeply. It couldn't be called a promising beginning. (She had sixteen pounds already, by the way, when she had been a parlour-maid. Such are the prizes of the higher education for women in the scholastic profession.)

They whispered together for a little while longer, less audibly, and then Mrs. Walton began closely to cross-question the little pupil-teacher. Minna answered all her questions satisfactorily—she had been baptised, confirmed, was a member of the Church of England, played the piano, could teach elementary French, had an excellent temper, didn't mind dining with the children, would

go to early communion, could mend dresses and tuckers, wasn't particular about her food, never read books of an irreligious tendency, and would assist in the housework of the nursery whenever necessary.

'In fact,' Minna said, with as much quiet dignity as she could command, 'I'm not at all afraid of house-work, because (I think I ought to tell you) I was out at service for some years before I went to the Birkbeck Schools.'

Reverend Walton lifted his eyebrows in subdued astonishment. Mrs. Walton coughed drily. Then they held another whispered confabulation for a few minutes, and at the end of it Mrs. Walton suggested blandly, in a somewhat altered tone of voice, 'Suppose in that case we were to say fourteen pounds and all found, and were to try to do altogether without the nursemaid?'

Though Minna saw that this was economy with a vengeance—cutting her down another

pound, and saving the whole of the nursemaid's wages—she was so anxious to find some chance of rejoining Colin that she answered somewhat reluctantly, 'If you think that would be best, I shouldn't mind trying it.'

'Oh, if it comes to that,' Mrs. Walton said loftily, 'we don't want anybody to come to us by way of a favour. Whoever accepts our post must accept it willingly, thankfully, and in a truly religious spirit, as a door thrown open to them liberally for doing good in.'

Minna bowed faintly. 'I would accept the situation,' she said as well as she was able, though the words stuck in her throat (for was she not taking it as a horrid necessity, for Colin's sake only?) 'in just that spirit.'

Mrs. Walton nodded her triumph. 'That'll do then,' she said 'What did she say her name was, Cyril? We'll inquire about you of this Miss Jigamaree.'

Reverend Walton took out a pencil and note-book ostentatiously to put down the address.

‘My name is Minna Wroe,’ the poor girl said, colouring once more violently.

‘Minna!’ Reverend Walton said, biting the end of his pencil with a meditative frown. ‘You must mean Mary. You can’t have been christened Minna, you know, can you?’

‘Yes, I was,’ Minna answered defiantly. ‘I was christened Minna, quite simply. M-I-N-N-A, Minna.’

Reverend Walton entered it in his note-book under protest. ‘M-I-N-N-A,’ he said, ‘Minna; R-O-W-E, Rowe, I suppose.’

‘No,’ Minna answered, ‘not R-O-W-E: W-R-O-E, Wroe.’

Reverend Walton sucked the other end of his pencil in evident hesitation. ‘Never heard of such a name in all my life,’ he said, dubitatively. ‘Must be some mistake somewhere.’

All the Rowes I ever heard of were R-O-W-E's.'

Minna didn't tell him that the names Rowe and Wroe are perfectly distinct in origin and meaning, because she wasn't aware of that interesting fact in the history and etymology of English nomenclature: but she did answer stoutly, with some vehemence, 'My family have always spelt the name as I spell it.'

Reverend Walton sneered visibly. 'Probably,' he said, 'your family didn't know any better. Nothing's more common in country parishes than to find that people don't know even how to spell their own names. At any rate, while you remain a member of our household, you'd better arrange to call yourself Mary Rowe, R-O-W-E, spelt in the ordinary proper civilised manner.'

Poor Minna's smothered indignation could restrain itself no longer. 'No,' she said firmly, with flashing eyes (in spite of her guaranteed

good temper), 'I'll call myself nothing of the sort. I'm not ashamed of my name, and I won't change it.' (A rash promise that, on the part of a young lady.) 'And you needn't take the trouble to apply to Miss Woollacott, thank you, for on further consideration I've come to the conclusion that your place won't suit me. And so good morning to you.'

Reverend Walton and wife conferred together in a loud whisper with one another for a few minutes more, and then with a profound salutation walked with dignity in perfect silence out of the ante-room. 'And I think, Cyril,' Mrs. Walton observed in a stage aside as they held the door ajar behind them, 'we're very lucky indeed to have seen the young woman in one of her exhibitions of temper, for besides her unfortunate antecedents, dear, I'm quite convinced, in my own mind, that she isn't a really Christian person.'

'Won't do, that lot?' the agent said,

popping his head in at the door to where Minna stood alone and crimson; 'ah, I thought not. Too much in this line, aren't they?'—and the agent cleverly drove in an imaginary screw into the back of his left hand with a non-existent screw-driver in his right. 'Well, well, one down, t'other come on. You'll see Reverend O'Donovan, now, miss, won't you?'

'What, another clergyman?' Minna cried a little piteously. 'Oh, no, not now, if you please, Mr. Coppinger. I feel so flurried and frightened and agitated.'

'Bless your heart, miss,' the agent said, not unkindly, 'you needn't be a bit afraid, you know, of Reverend O'Donovan. He's a widower, he is—four children—nice old fatherly person—you needn't be a bit afraid of seeing him. Besides, he's waiting for you.'

Thus reassured, Minna consented with some misgivings to go through the ordeal of a further interview with the Reverend O'Donovan.

In a minute the agent returned, ushering into the room a very brutal-looking old gentleman, the most surprising that Minna remembered ever to have seen in the whole course of her experience. In spite of his old-fashioned clerical dress, she could hardly believe that he could really be a clergyman. He seemed to her at first sight the exact model of the Irish villain of Mr. Tenniel's most distorted fancy in the 'Punch' cartoons. She couldn't make out all his features at once, she was so much afraid of him; but she saw immediately that what made his face so especially ugly was the fact that he had a broken nose, just like a prize-fighter. Minna quite shrank from him as he came in, and felt she should hardly have courage to get through the interview.

But the old clergyman put a chair for her with old-fashioned politeness, and then said in a gentle musical voice which quite astonished her coming from such a person, 'Pray be

seated, Miss Wroe ; I learned your name from Mr. Coppinger. We may have to talk over matters at a little length—I'm an old man and prosy—so we may as well make ourselves comfortable together beforehand. That's my name, you see, Cornelius O'Donovan ; a very Irish one, isn't it ? but we don't live in Ireland ; in fact I've never been there. We live at a very quiet little country village in the weald of Surrey. Do you like the country ?'

There was something so sweet and winning in the old clergyman's cultivated voice, in spite of his repulsive appearance, that Minna plucked up heart a little, and answered timidly, ' Oh, yes, I'm a country girl myself, and I'm awfully fond of the country, though I've had to live for some years in London. I come from Dorsetshire.'

' From Dorsetshire !' Mr. O'Donovan answered in the same charming gentle accent. ' Why, that's quite delightful—indeed, almost

providential. I was born in Dorsetshire myself, Miss Wroe; my father had a parish there, a sweet little fisher village parish—Moreton Freshwater: do you happen to know it?’

‘Moreton!’ Minna repeated warmly. ‘Moreton! oh yes, of course I do. Why, it’s just close to our home. My folks live at Wootton Mandeville.’

‘God bless my soul!’ exclaimed the old clergyman with a little start. ‘This is really providential, quite providential. I knew Wootton Mandeville when I was a boy—every stone in it. Dear me! and so you come from Wootton Mandeville, do you? Ah, well, I’m afraid all the people I knew at Wootton must be dead long ago. There was old Susan who sold apples at the corner by the Buddle, where the coach used to stop to set down passengers; she must have been dead, well, before you were born, I should say, certainly. And old Jack Legge that drove the coach; a fine old

fellow, he was, with a green patch on the eye that Job Puddicombe blinded ; I can remember his giving me a lift, as what we used to call a super—defrauding his employers, I'm sorry to say ; but in the West Country, you know, in the old days, people did those things and thought no harm of them. And Ginger Radford, the smuggler ; I'm afraid he was a bad lot, poor man, but by Jove, what a fine, hearty, open, manly fellow. Ah yes, capital people, even the worst of them, those good old-fashioned West Country folks.'

The old clergyman paused a moment to wipe his glasses, and looked at Minna pensively. Minna began to notice now that, though his face was so very dreadful to look at, his eyes were tender and bright and fatherly. Perhaps after all he wasn't really quite so terrible as she at first imagined him.

'Ah,' Mr. O'Donovan went on, replacing his spectacles, 'and there was Dick Churchill

and his son Fiddler Sam, too, who used to draw pictures. You might have known Fiddler Sam; though, bless my heart, even Sam must be an old man nowadays, for he was older than I was. And then there was Fisherman Wroe, and his son Geargey; fine young fellow, Geargey, with a powerful deal of life and spirit in him—— why God bless my soul, they said your name was Miss Wroe, didn't they? If I may venture to ask you, now—excuse me if I'm wrong—you don't happen to be a daughter of George Wroe's of Wootton, do you?'

'Yes,' Minna answered, warming a little towards the old gentleman, in spite of his repulsive countenance (it didn't look half so bad already, either, and she noticed that when once you got accustomed to the broken nose, it began to beam with courtesy and benevolence.) 'I'm George Wroe's daughter.'

Mr. O'Donovan's face lighted up at once

with a genial smile of friendly recognition. 'George Wroe's daughter!' he cried, with much animation. 'George Wroe's daughter! Why, this is really most providential, my dear. God bless my soul, we don't need any introduction to one another. I knew your father well: many's the time we've been out fishing for whiting pollock on the Swale Daze together; a fine young fellow as ever lived, my dear, your father. When you see him again—he's living, I trust—that's well; I'm glad to hear it—whenever you see him again, my child, just you ask him whether he remembers Con O'Donovan (that's my name, you see, Cornelius; fifty years ago they used to call me Con O'Donovan). And just you ask him, too, whether he remembers how we got chased by the revenue cutter from Portland Roads mistaking us for the gig of the French smack, that brought over brandy (smuggled, I'm sorry to say—ah, dear me, dear me!) to

tranship into old Gingery Radford's "Lively Sally"; and how we ran, and the cutter chased us, and we put on all sail, and made for Golden Cap, and the cutter went fifteen miles out of her way bearing down upon us, and caught us at last, and overhauled us, and found after all we'd nothing aboard but a small cargo of lob-worms and launces! Ah, bless my soul, that was a splendid run, that was! Oh, ho, ho! a splendid run, that one!' and Mr. O'Donovan laughed to himself a big, gentle, good-humoured laugh at the recollection of the boisterous jokes of fifty years ago, and of the captain of the cutter, who swore at them most terribly, in a varied and extensive assortment of English profanity, after the fashion of the United Service at the beginning of the present century.

'And now, my dear,' he went on, after another short pause—'I won't call you Miss Wroe any longer, if you're my old friend

Geargey's daughter—excuse our plain old Dorsetshire dialect. So you want to be a governess? Well, well, tell me all about it, now. How did it all happen?’

By this time Minna had got so far accustomed to the old gentleman, that she began her whole story from the very beginning, and told it without shame or foolish hesitation. When Mr. O'Donovan had heard it through with profound attention, he looked at the little gipsy face with a look of genuine admiration, and then murmured to himself quite softly, ‘God bless my soul, what a very remarkable plucky young lady! Quite a worthy daughter of my dear brave old friend Geargey! Went out to service to begin with; perfectly honourable of her; the Wroes were always a fine, manly, honest, courageous, self-respecting lot, but never above doing a turn of decent work either, whenever it was offered to them. And then turned schoolmistress;

and now wants to better herself by being a governess. Most natural, most natural; and very praiseworthy. A most excellent thing, honest domestic service—too many of our girls nowadays turn up their noses at it—but not of course at all suitable for a young lady of your attainments and natural refinement, my dear; oh no, no—far from it, far from it.’

‘Well, my dear,’ he continued, looking at her gently once more, ‘this is just what the matter is. We want a nursery governess for four little ones—girls—the eldest nine; motherless—motherless.’

As Mr. O’Donovan repeated that word pathetically, as if to himself, Minna saw that his face would have been quite handsome but for the broken nose which disfigured it for the first twenty minutes of an acquaintance only. ‘Are they your daughters, sir?’ she ventured to ask, with a sympathetic tinge of feeling in her voice.

‘No, my dear, no,’ Mr. O’Donovan answered, with the tears standing in the corners of his bright eyes. ‘Granddaughters, granddaughters. I never had but one child, their mother; and she, my dear——’ he pointed above, and then, turning his hand vaguely eastward, muttered softly, ‘India.’

There was a moment’s silence, before Minna went on to ask further particulars; and as soon as the old clergyman had answered all her questions to her perfect satisfaction, he asked in a quiet, assured sort of tone, ‘Then I may take it for granted, may I, that you’ll come to us?’

‘Why, certainly,’ Minna answered, her heart throbbing a little, ‘if you’ll take me, sir.’

‘Take you!’ Mr. O’Donovan echoed. ‘Take you! God bless my soul, my dear, why, of course we’ll be only too glad to get my old friend Gargey’s daughter. And when you’re writing to your father, my child, just

you mention to him that you're going to Con O'Donovan's, and ask him if he remembers——'

But the remainder of Mr. O'Donovan's reminiscence about how that astonishingly big conger-eel bit the late vicar in the hand ('I never laughed so much in my life, my dear, as to see the astonishment and indignation of that pompous self-satisfied old fellow—a most exemplary man in every respect, of course, but still, we must admit, an absurdly pompous old fellow') has no immediate connection with the general course of this history.

However, before Minna finally closed with the old rector's offer, she felt it incumbent upon her to tell him the possibility of her leaving her situation in the course of time, in order to go to Rome; and the rector's face had now grown so peculiarly mild in her eyes, that Minna even ventured to hint indirectly that the proposed visit was not wholly unconnected with the story of her cousin Colin,

which story she was thereupon compelled to repeat forthwith to the patient old man with equal minuteness. Mr. O'Donovan smiled at her that placid gentle smile, devoid of all vulgar innuendo or nonsense, with which an old gentleman can sometimes show that he reads the secret of a young girl's bosom.

'And are you engaged to your cousin Colin, my dear?' he asked at last, quite innocently and simply.

'Not exactly engaged, you know,' Minna answered, blushing, 'but ——'

'Ah, yes, quite so, quite so; I know all about it,' Mr. O'Donovan replied with a kindly gesture. 'Well, my dear, I don't see why you shouldn't come and live with us for the present, at least as a stop-gap; and meanwhile, I'll try my best to look out for some family who are going to Rome for you. We might advertise in the *Guardian*; capital paper for advertisements of that sort, the *Guardian*. Anyhow,

meanwhile, you'll come and take us as we are ; and very providential, too, very providential. To think I should have been lucky enough, quite by accident (as the world says), to hit upon a daughter of my old friend Geargey ! And I'm so glad you're not afraid of me, either, because of my misfortune. A great many people are, just at first, especially. But it wears off, it wears off with habituation. A cricket-ball, my dear, that's all—when I was under twenty ; off Sam Churchill's bat, too ; but no fault of his, of course—I was always absurdly short-sighted. You'll get accustomed to it in time, my child, as I myself have.'

But Minna didn't need time to get accustomed to it, for she could now see already that old Mr. O'Donovan's face was really a very handsome, gentle, and cultivated one ; and that even in spite of the broken nose, you felt at once how handsome it was, as soon as it was lighted up by his genial smile and the

pleasant flash of his bright old eyes. And in one month from that morning, she was comfortably installed, under Mr. O'Donovan's guidance, in the delightful ivy-covered parsonage of a remote and beautiful little Surrey village.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BREAKING UP.

‘AND in a few weeks, Miss Russell, we shall all be scattered to the four winds of heaven! You’ll be gone to England, the Wilmers to Aix, I to America, and except Winthrop and Churchill, our whole little Anglo-American colony will have deserted Rome altogether for summer quarters! I’m sorry for it, in some ways, for our winter has really been a most enjoyable one.’

‘And so am I, Mr. Audouin, very sorry. But we must all meet here again some day or other. Papa’s promised that in four years he’ll bring me back for another trip. His next three winters will be taken up with his

new duties at York, of course ; but as soon as he's free again, he's going to bring me to Rome for a second visit. Perhaps by that time you'll be over once more, on a journey of inspection to look up your clever young protégé, Mr. Winthrop.'

Audouin hesitated. Should he propose to her then and there, or should he wait for four more long solitary American winters? He would lead up to it tentatively, first of all, and see whether fortune favoured his present adventure. 'Well,' he answered, dubiously, 'I hardly know whether to say yes or no to that invitation, Miss Russell. I'm not fond of cities, and I've longed many, many times this winter for the expansive breadth of our American woodlands. I wasn't born to be in populous city pent ; I pine for the resinous smell of the primæval forest. Only one thing, indeed, has kept me here so long this journey ; your presence at Rome, Miss Russell.'

He looked at her as he spoke those words to see whether there was any response in her eyes or not; but Gwen only answered carelessly, 'What pretty things you always say to me, Mr. Audouin! Our English young men have quite lost the fine old-fashioned art of paying compliments, I imagine; but you and Mr. Winthrop seem to have kept it up beyond the Atlantic in a state of the highest original perfection. You almost remind me of Sir Charles Grandison.'

Audouin's eyes dropped. Clearly there was no chance of pressing the question with the beautiful Englishwoman just at present. Well, well, she was very young yet; better wait a year or two for her ideas to expand and ripen. Very young people always think anyone above thirty so extremely ancient; as they grow older themselves, their seniors by a decade or so seem to grow progressively younger, as if to meet them. 'Well, I'll close

with your suggestion and make it an engagement, Miss Russell,' he said, half sighing. 'If you'll come back to Rome in four years' time, I'll come back the same winter to see how friend Hiram progresses with his artistic studies. Four years is a short space of time in a human life, after all; and if you contemplate being here at the end of that space, why, Rome will at least have one more attraction for me then than ever.'

Gwen laughed, and turned off the conversation to the latest nothing of Roman society.

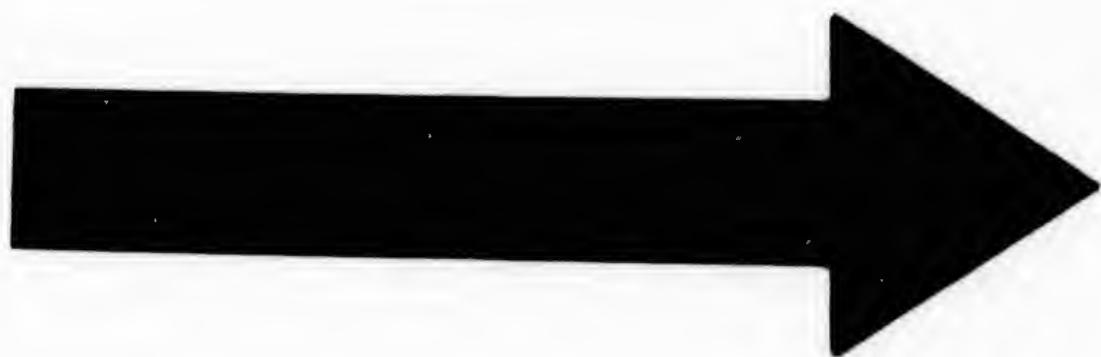
A week later, Audouin went away to sail for America. But he carried back with him a little memento which strangely surprised the servants at Lakeside, when he set it up in a velvet-covered frame, among the Greek vases and tiny Egyptian sardonyx mummies, on his study mantelpiece. It was the photograph of a young lady in an English riding costume, by Montabone of the Piazza di

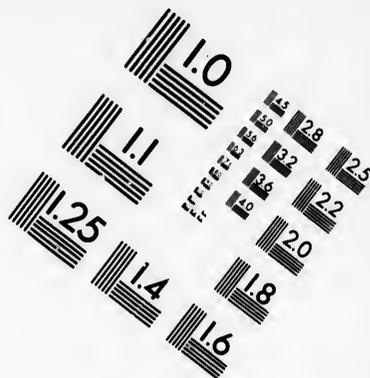
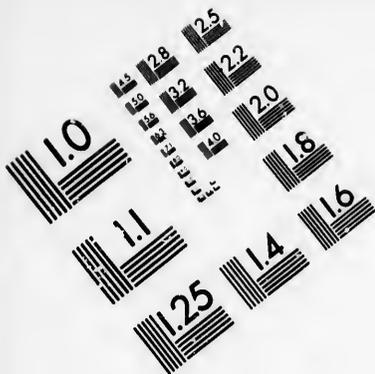
Spagna; and when the housemaid slipped it out, 'jest to see who on airth could hev give it to him,' she found on the back the little inscription, 'For Mr. Audouin, with Gwen Howard-Russell's best remembrances.'

Gwen herself, too, went before long; but before she went, she mentioned casually to Colin Churchill that she expected to be back at Rome in about four winters.

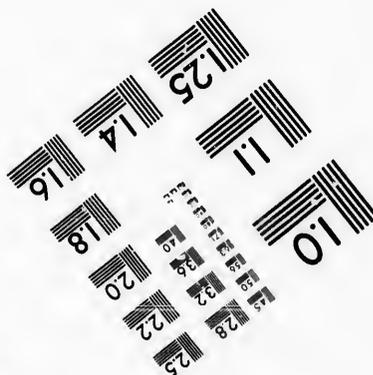
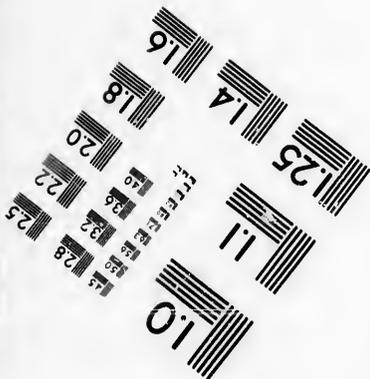
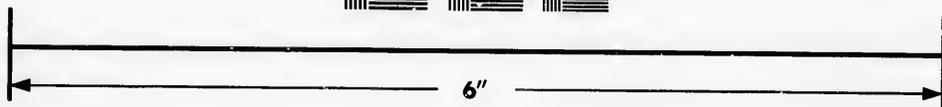
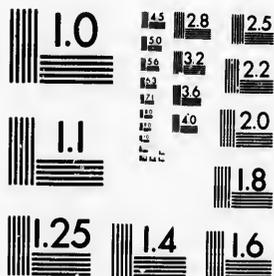
'We shall all be delighted to see you in Italy again, Miss Howard-Russell,' Colin answered, with hardly more than mere formal politeness. 'Won't we, Winthrop? Miss Russell is such a sincere admirer of painting and sculpture.'

Was that man's heart as cold and hard as the marble from which he cut his weeping nymphs and Calabrian peasants? Did he want a woman to go down upon her knees before him, or didn't he see when she was making as easy running for him as any man





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can expect from civilised society? He was really too provoking.

The night before Gwen left Rome, however, a little oblong parcel arrived at the hotel for her, containing a picture or something of the sort, left at the door by an English signor, the porter said. Was it one of Colin Churchill's designs for his unexecuted statues, Gwen wondered? She cut the string hastily, and opened the packet with a little internal flutter. No—wrong—evidently not from Mr. Churchill. It was a water-colour sketch of the Emissario at the Lago d' Albano, carefully finished in the minutest detail; and at the back was written in pencil, somewhat shakily, 'With Hiram Winthrop's compliments.'

'How very polite of Mr. Winthrop,' Gwen said in a careless voice that hardly hid her disappointment. 'He saw I was taken with the picture, and he's finished it off beautifully,

and sent it to me for a parting present. It's a beautiful sketch, papa, isn't it? Come and see what Mr. Winthrop has sent me, Mrs. Wilmer.'

'A very well-behaved young man indeed,' the colonel put in, looking at the sketch casually, as if it were an object unworthy of a British field-officer's serious attention. 'A very well-behaved young man, although an American, and much less forward than that sculptor fellow, who's always thrusting himself upon us on every conceivable occasion.'

Hiram Winthrop had no photographs, but he had a great many little pencil sketches of a certain beautiful, proud-faced English-woman, which he didn't display upon the mantelpiece of his attic bedroom down the narrow Roman alley, because he preferred to keep them securely locked up in a small box, whence he took them out religiously every night and morning during the

four years he spent in exile in that terrible, grimy, unnatural city. It was a very clear-cut, sculpturesque face indeed, but in spite of all Hiram's efforts at softening, it somehow managed to look most terribly inexorable. If Gwen found Colin Churchill blind, Hiram Winthrop found Gwen herself absolutely adamantine.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DEACON MAKES A GOOD END.

IN his bright little study at Lakeside, Lothrop Audouin had just laid down a parchment-bound volume of Carlyle's 'French Revolution' and turned to look out of the pretty bay-window, embowered in clematis and Virginia creeper, that opened on to the placid tawny creek and the blue expanse of more distant Ontario. 'How unawares the summer has crept upon us,' he murmured to himself, half-audibly, as was his fashion. 'When I first got back from Rome in early May, the trees were all but leafless; and now July is far gone, and before many weeks we shall be beginning to think of the melting

tints of our golden autumn. That's the difference, really, between revolution and evolution. The most truly important events make no stir on their first taking place; they grow, surely but silently. The changes to which all things conspire, and for which they have prepared the way beforehand, produce no explosion, because they are gradual, and the universe consents to them. A birth takes place in silence, and sums up the result of endless generations; but a murder, which is at war with the constitution of things, creates a tumult immediately. What a fracas over Camille at the Café Foy! and yet, with a whiff of grapeshot, the whole fabric of liberty disappears bodily. What a slow growth the democratic constitution of Massachusetts! and yet, when a convulsion seizes on the entire continent, and north and south tear one another to pieces for a grand idea, the democratic constitutions float unhurt

upon the sea of commotion, and come out intact in the fulness of time with redoubled splendour! A good idea! I'll enter it in my diary, elaborated a little into better English.' For Audouin was a writer by instinct, and though he had never yet perpetrated a printed book, he kept a dainty little journal in his desk, in which he jotted down side by side his pretty thoughts, as they occurred to him, and his observations, half-scientific, half-fanciful, on the progress of nature all around him. This diary he regarded as his chief literary testament; and he meant to leave it in his will to Hiram Winthrop, with strict injunctions that it should be published after his death, for private circulation only, among the select few who were competent to understand it. Surely a good man and true may be permitted, in the byways and background of his inner nature, to indulge in his harmless little foibles and affectations.

He had risen to take out the diary, full of his little poetical conceit, when the maid (Audouin wasn't such a recluse that he didn't like to keep his hermitage well-appointed) brought in a note for him on a quaintly chased Japanese salver. He took the note and glanced at it casually. It hadn't come by post, but by hand—a rare event in the isolation of Lakeside, where neighbours were none, and visitors few and distant. He broke open the envelope, and read the few pencilled lines within hastily:—

‘Deacon Winthrop would be obliged if you would come over at once to see him, as I am seriously ill, and the Lord is calling me. For Deacon Winthrop, faithfully, Keziah H. Hoptree.’

Audouin put on his hat at once, and went to the porch, with its clambering roses, to see the bearer, who sat in a high buggy, flipping the flies off his horse's ear with his long whipcord.

‘Wal,’ the man said, ‘I guess, Mr. Audouin, you’d better look alive if you want to see the deacon comfortably afore the Lord’s taken him.’

‘All right,’ Audouin answered, with Yankee irreverence, jumping up hastily into the tall buggy. ‘Drive right away, sir, and we’ll run a race to see which gets there first, ourselves, or Death, the Great Deliverer.’

The man drove along the rough unmade roads as only an American farmer can drive in a life-and-death hurry.

Geauga County hadn’t altered greatly to the naked eye since the days long, long ago, when Hiram Winthrop used to sulk and hide in the blackberry bottom. The long straight road still stretched as of yore evenly between its two limits, in a manner calculated to satisfy all the strictest requirements of a definition in Euclid; and the parallel lines of snake fence on either hand still ran along at

equal distances till they seemed to meet on the vanishing point of the horizon, somewhere a good deal on the hither side of mathematical infinity. The farms were still all bare, gaunt, dusty, and unlovable; the trees were somewhat fewer even than of old (for this was now acknowledged to be an unusually fine agricultural section), and the charred and blackened stumps that once diversified the weedy meadows had long for the most part been pulled up and demolished by the strenuous labours of men and horses. But otherwise Audouin could notice little difference between the Muddy Creek of fifteen years ago, and the Muddy Creek of that present moment. Fifteen more crops of fall and spring wheat had been reaped and garnered off the flat expanses; fifteen more generations of pigs (no, hogs) had been duly converted into prime American pork, and thence by proper rotation into human fat,

bone, and muscle; fifteen winters had buried with their innocent sheet of white the blank desolation of fifteen ugly and utilitarian summers; but the farmers and farmhouses, though richer and easier than before, had not yet wakened one whit the more than of old to a rudimentary perception of the fact that the life of man may possibly consist of some other elements than corn, and pork, and the rigorous Calvinistic theology of Franklin P. Hopkins. Beauty was still crying in the streets of Muddy Creek Deepo, and no man regarded her.

At last the long dreary drive was over—a drive, Audouin thought to himself with a sigh, which couldn't be equalled anywhere in the world for naked ugliness, outside this great, free, enlightened, and absolutely materialised republic—and the buggy drew up at the gate of Deacon Zephaniah Winthrop's homestead, in the exact central spot of that wide and

barren desert of utter fruitfulness. Audouin leaped from the buggy hastily, and went on through the weedy front yard to the door of the bare white farmhouse.

‘Wal, I’m glad you’ve kem, anyhow,’ the hired help (presumably Keziah H. Hoptree) exclaimed in her shrill loud voice as she opened the door to him; ‘for deacon’s jest tearin’ mad tew see you afore the Lord takes him; he says he wants tew give you a message fur Hiram, an’ he can’t die in peace until he’s given it.’

‘Is he very ill?’ Audouin asked.

‘Not so sick tew talk to,’ the girl answered, harshly; ‘but Dr. Eselman, he says he ain’t goin’ to live a week longer. He’s bin doctoring himself, that’s whar it is, with Chief Tecumseh’s Paregoric Elixir; an’ now he’s gone so fur that Dr. Eselman reckons he can’t never git that thar Elixir out of his constittooshun nohow. Jest you step right in here, judge, an’ see him.’

Audouin followed her into the sick room, where the old deacon, thinner, bonier, and more sallow than ever, lay vacantly on his propped-up pillows.

'You set you down thar, mister,' he began feebly, as soon as he was aware of Audouin's presence, 'an' make yourself right comfortable. I wanted to see you, you may calkilate, to give you a message for Hiram.' He paused a little between each sentence, as if he spoke with difficulty; and Audouin waited patiently to hear what it might be, with some misgiving.

'You tell him,' the deacon went on in his slow jerky manner, 'when you see him or correspond to him, that I forgive him.'

It was with some effort that Audouin managed to answer seriously, 'I will, Mr. Winthrop, you may rely upon it.'

'Yes,' the deacon continued with as much Christian magnanimity as his enfeebled con-

dition would permit him to express ; ' I forgive him. Freely and on-reservedly, I forgive him. Hiram ain't bin a son to me as I might hev anticipated. Thar was too much of his mother's family in him altogether, I reckon. The Winthrops was never a wild lot, an' wouldn't hev gone off paintin' pictures and goin' to Italy as that thar boy's done, anyhow. I nught hev expected that Hiram wou'd hev stopped to home to help me with the farm, and git things comfortable some ; but thar, he was allus one o' the idlest, sulkiest, onaccountablest boys I ever met with, nowhar. He's gone off, foolin' around with them thar pictures, an' I don't suppose he'll never come to any good, nohow. But I forgive him, mister ; I freely forgive him. 'Tain't what one might hev looked fur from a young man who was raised in the Hopkinsite confession, an' whose parents were both of 'em believers ; but these things do come out most onaccount-

ably, that they might all be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in on-righteousness.'

Audouin merely bowed his head in solemn silence. The picture of the gaunt, hard-faced old man, sitting up in bed upon his pillows in his loneliness, and speaking thus, after his kind, of the son whom he had alienated from him by his unsympathetic harshness, was one too dreary for him to look at without an almost visible shudder.

'It's a mercy,' the deacon meandered on, after a short pause, gasping for breath, 'that his poor mother didn't never live to see the worst of it. Hiram might hev kem home, and helped me look after the farm and the cattle; instead of which, I've had to git in hired helps, since Mis' Winthrop died, while he was off somewhere or other painting pictures. He's in Italy now, learnin' still, he says, when he wrote to me last; I should hev

expected he'd hev learnt the trade completely afore this, an' be practisin' it for a livin', as anybody might expect at his age, nat'rally. But he'll hev to come home, now, anyhow, and take to the farm; fur of course it goes to him, mister, an' I hope now he'll give up them thar racketty ways he's got into, and begin to settle down a bit at last, into a decent farmer. He's no boy now, Hiram ain't, an' he ought to be gettin' steady. I don't say I hev any complaint against you personally, mister, on that score,' the deacon went on, shaking his head magnanimously. 'You've led him into it, I know; but I understand you meant it for the best, though it's turned out uncommon bad; an' I'm a Christian man, I hope, an' I bear you no grudge for it. But what I want you to write an' tell him's jest this. You write an' say that his father, afore he died, freely forgave him, an' left him the farm and fixins. In time to come, mister, I dessay that thar boy'll

often regret an' think to himself, "While my father was here, I might have made more of him." But it'll be a comfort to him anyhow to know that I forgave him; an' you jest take an' write it to him, an' I'll be obliged to you.'

Audouin sat a long time by the old man's bed, wondering whether any word of regret or penitence would come from him for his own grievous error in making his son's young life a burden and a misery to him (for Hiram, with all his reticence, had let his friend see by stray side hints how sad his days had been in Geauga County); but no word came, nor was the possibility of it within the deacon's narrow self-righteous self-satisfied soul. The hours wore away, and Audouin watched and waited, but still the deacon went on at intervals, all about his own goodness to Hiram, and Hiram's natural unregenerate liking for painting pictures. At last, Keziah came in, and warned Audouin that the deacon mustn't

be allowed any longer to excite himself. So Audouin went away, sad and disheartened. 'Great heavens!' he said to himself, as he jumped up again into the buggy, which was waiting to take him back to Lakeside; 'in spite of our common schools, and our ten thousand newspapers, and all our glib American buncombe about enlightenment, and education, and our noble privileges, is there any country in the world, I wonder, where the gap between those who think and feel and know, and those who wallow in their own conceited ignorance and narrowness and brutality, yawns wider and deeper than in these United States of ours, at the latter end of this emancipated nineteenth century? Look at the great gulf fixed between Boston, or even Chicago, and Geauga County! Why, the Florentines of the middle ages, the old Etruscans, the naked Egyptian, the Chinaman, the Hindoo coolie, are all of them a whole

spiritual world ahead of Deacon Winthrop! They at least know, or knew, that the human heart has in it some higher need than corn, or pork, or rice, or millet; that man shall not live by bread alone; that of all the gifts God gave to man, He gave none better than the knowledge of beauty! Ay, even the monkey that plays among the mango trees considers the feathers in the parrot's tail as worthy of his passing attention as the biggest cocoanut.

‘And yet, not higher, after all, those Chinamen, when one comes to think of it; for is there not mysteriously inherent somehow, in the loins of that utterly sensual materialised clod, the potentiality of begetting Hiram Winthrop?’

‘I wonder what sort of people my own eight great-grandparents would be, if I could only get them into the little sitting-room at Lakeside, and compare notes with them about

heaven and earth, and Herbert Spencer, and the Apollo Belvedere!

A week later, Audouin had to write to Hiram, and tell him that the deacon had passed away, and had forgiven him. 'Now, my dear Hiram,' Audouin wrote, towards the end of his letter, 'your father leaves the farm at Muddy Creek to you; and if you take my advice, you will sell it at once, for what it'll fetch (not much, I doubt me) and apply the principal to paying your expenses for a year or two more at Seguin's studio. You hold your pictorial talents in trust for the American nation, which even now sadly needs them; and you mustn't throw away your chances of the highest self-improvement for the sake of a little filthy lucre, which, even if invested, would really bring you in next to nothing. Nay, rather, to use it in studying at Rome is really to invest it in the best possible manner; for, merely judging the result

as a Wall Street speculator would judge it, by the actual return in dollars and cents, United States currency, your pictures will bring you in tenfold in the end of what you spend in preparing to paint them. Though not for money, I hope, Hiram, not for money, but for art's sake, and for the highest final development of this our poor groping humanity, which is still so base, take it for all in all, that I sometimes almost wonder whether it can be really worth our while to try to do anything to improve it.'

Yet so strangely compounded is this human nature of ours for all that, that when Hiram Winthrop read that letter to himself in his own small room beneath the roof of the Roman attic, he lay down upon his bed, and cried passionately in the dusk for the poor narrow-minded old deacon; and thought with a sort of regretful tenderness of the dim old days in the blackberry bottom; and

murmured to himself that when he was a boy he was no doubt terribly obstinate and perverse and provoking. And now that he was a man, must he not strive to do as Audouin told him? the one true friend he had yet met with. And then he undressed and lay awake a long time, with the sense of utter loneliness pressing upon his poor solitary head more drearily than ever.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN ART PATRON.

THE four years that passed before Gwen Howard-Russell and Lothrop Audouin returned to Rome, were years of bright promise and quick performance for Colin Churchill. He hadn't been eighteen months with Maragliano, when the master took him aside one day and said to him kindly, 'My friend, you will only waste your time by studying with me any longer. You must take a studio on your own account, and begin earning a little money.'

'But where can I get one?' Colin asked.

'There is one vacant five doors off,' Maragliano answered. 'I have been to see it,

and you can have it for very little. It's so near, that I can drop in from time to time and assist you with my advice and experience. But indeed, Churchill, you need either very little; for I fear the time is soon coming when the pupil is to excel the master.'

'If I thought that, master,' Colin replied smilingly, 'I should stop here for ever. But as I know I can never hope to rival you, I shall take the studio, and tempt fortune.'

It was one morning during the next winter that Colin was hard at work upon his clay group of Autumn borne by the Breezes, then nearly completed, when the door of the new studio opened suddenly, and a plain, farmer-looking old man in a tweed suit, entered unannounced.

'Good morning, Mr. Churchill,' he said, in a voice of infinite condescension. 'My niece sent me here to look at your statues, you know. You've got some very pretty things

here, really. Some very pretty things indeed, as Gwen told me.'

'Oh, I see,' Colin answered, with a smile of recognition. 'It was Miss Howard-Russell, then, who told you where to find me.'

'Well, not exactly,' the visitor went on, peering at the Autumn with a look of the intensest critical interest; 'she told me I should find you at the studio of a man of the name of Maragliano—or something—I think she called him. Well, I went there, ferreted out the place, and found a fuzzy-headed foreigner Italian fellow, all plastered over with mud and rubbish, who spoke the most ridiculous broken English; and *he* told me you'd moved to these new quarters. So I came on here to look you up and give you a commission, you know—I think you call it. My niece—she's really a first cousin once removed, or something equally abstruse, I fancy—but I always speak of her as my niece

for short, because she's a good deal younger than I am, and I stand to her *in loco avunculi*; *in loco avunculi*, Mr. Churchill. Well, she positively insisted upon it that I must come and give you a commission.'

'It was very good of her, I'm sure,' Colin answered, his heart fluttering somewhat; for this was positively his first nibble. 'May I ask if you are also a Mr. Howard-Russell?'

The visitor drew himself up to his utmost height with much dignity, as though he felt surprised to think that Colin could for a single moment have imagined him to be nothing more on earth than a plain Mister. 'No,' he said, in a chilly voice; 'I fancied my niece had mentioned my name to you. I am Lord Beaminster.'

Colin bowed his head slightly. He wasn't much used to earls and viscounts in those days, though he grew afterwards to understand the habits and manners of the species

with great accuracy ; but he felt that after all the Earl of Beaminster, mighty magnate and land-owner as he was, didn't really differ very conspicuously in outer appearance from any other respectable fox-hunting country gentleman. Except that, perhaps, he looked, if anything, a trifle stupider than the average.

The earl considerably left Colin a minute or so to accustom himself to the shock of suddenly mixing in such exalted society, and then he said again, narrowly observing the Autumn, 'Some very pretty things, indeed, I must admit. Now, what do you call this one? A capital group. I've half a mind to commission it.'

'That's Autumn borne by the Breezes,' Colin answered, gazing up at it for the thousandth time with a loving attention. 'My idea was to represent Autumn as a beautiful youth, scattering leaves with his two hands, and upheld by the wild west wind—"the

breath' of autumn's being," as Shelley calls it.'

'Quite so,' the earl said, assuming once more a studied critical attitude; 'but I don't see the leaves, you know—I don't see the leaves, Mr. Churchill.'

'It would be impossible, of course,' Colin replied, 'to represent any of the leaves as falling through the air unsupported; and so I didn't care to put any in Autumn's hands, even, preferring to trust so much to the imagination of the spectator. In art it's a well-known canon that one ought, in fact, always to leave something to the imagination.'

'But might I suggest,' Lord Beaminster said, putting his head a little on one side, and surveying the figure with profound gravity, 'that you might easily support the falling leaves by an imperceptible wire passing neatly through a small drilled eye into the legs of the Breezes.'

Colin smiled. 'I don't think,' he said, 'that that would be a very artistic mode of treatment.'

'Indeed,' the earl answered with some hesitation 'Well, I'm surprised to hear you say that, now ; for my father, who was always considered a man of very remarkable taste, and a great patron of art and artists, had a Triton constructed for our carp-pond at Netherton, blowing a spout of water, in marble, from his trumpet, and the falling drops, where the spout broke into spray, were all secured by wires in the way I mention. Still, of course,' this with a deferential air of mock-modesty, 'I couldn't *dream* of pitting my opinion—a mere outsider's opinion—against yours in such a matter. But couldn't you at least make the leaves tumble in a sort of spire, you know, reaching to the ground ; touching one another, of course, so as to form a connected column, which would give

support to the right arm, now so very extended and aërial-looking.'

'Why,' Colin answered, beginning to fancy that perhaps even admission to the British peerage didn't naturally constitute a man a great art-critic, 'I don't think marble's a good medium in any case for representing anything so thin and delicate as falling leaves; and though of course a clever sculptor might choose to make the attempt, by way of showing his skill in overcoming a technical difficulty, for my part I look upon such mere mechanical *tours de force* as really unworthy of a true artist. Obedience to one's material rather than defiance of it is the thing to be aimed at. And, to tell you the truth, the pose of that right arm that you so much object to is the very point in the whole group that I most pride myself upon. Maragliano says it's a very fine and original conception.'

The earl stared at him intently for two

seconds, in blank astonishment. What a very extraordinary and conceited young fellow, really! The idea of his thus contradicting him, the Earl of Beaminster, in every particular! Still, Gwen had specially desired him to buy something from this man Churchill, and had said that he was going to become a very great and distinguished sculptor. For Gwen's sake, he would try to befriend the young man, and take no notice of his extraordinary rudeness

'Well,' he said slowly, after a long pause, 'I won't quarrel with you over the details. I should like to have that group in marble, and if you'll allow me, I'll commission it. Only, as we don't agree about the pose of the Autumn, I'll tell you what we'll do, Mr. Churchill; we'll compromise the matter. Suppose you remove the figure altogether, and put a clock-dial in its place. Then it'd do splendidly, you see, for the top

of the marble mantelpiece at Netherton Priory.'

Colin leant back against the parapet of the wainscot in blank dismay. What on earth was he to say to this terrible Goth of a Lord Beaminster? He wanted a first commission, badly enough, in all conscience, but how could he possibly consent to throw away the labour of so many days, and to destroy the beauty of that exquisite group by putting a dial in the place of Autumn? The idea was plainly too ridiculous. It was sacrilege, it was crime, it was sheer blasphemy against the divinity of beauty. 'I'm very sorry, Lord Beaminster,' he said, at last, regretfully. 'I should much have liked to execute the group for you in marble; but I really can't consent to sacrifice the Autumn. It's the central figure and inspiring idea of the entire composition. If you take it at all, I think you ought to take it exactly as the sculptor him-

self has first designed it. An artist, you know, gives much time and thought to what he is working upon. Be it merely the particular turn or twist of the bit of drapery he is just then modelling, his whole soul for that one day is all fixed and centred upon that single feature. The purchaser ought to remember that, and oughtn't to alter on a moment's hasty consideration what has cost the artist whole weeks and months of patient thought and arduous labour. And yet, I'm sorry not to perform my first work in marble for you ; for I'm a West Dorset man myself by birth and training, and I should have liked well to see my "Autumn and the Breezes" standing, where it ought to stand, in one of the big oriel windows of Netherton Priory.'

That last touch of unconscious and unintentional flattery just succeeded in turning the sharp edge of Lord Beaminster's anger. When Colin at first positively refused to let

him have the group with the dial in the centre, the earl could hardly conceal in his face his smouldering indignation. Such conceit, indeed, and such self-will he could never have believed in if he hadn't himself actually met with them. It positively took his breath away. But when Colin so far relented as to touch his territorial pride upon the quick (for the earl regarded himself as the personal embodiment of all West Dorset), Lord Beaminster relented too, and answered with something like geniality, 'Well, well! I'm always pleased when one of my own people rises to artistic or literary eminence, Mr. Churchill. We won't quarrel about trifles. You come from Wootton Mandeville, don't you? Ah, yes! Well, I'm the lord of the manor of Wootton, as you know, of course, and I'm pleased to think you should have come from one of my own places. We'll take the figures as they stand; we'll take them as they stand, and

I'll find a place for them somewhere at Netherton, I can promise you. Now how much will you charge me for this group, Autumn and all, in marble?'

Colin stood for a moment perfectly irresolute. That was a question about which, in his abstract devotion to the goodness of his artistic work, he had never yet given the slightest consideration. 'Well, I should think,' he said hesitatingly—'I don't know if I'm asking too much—it's a big composition, and there are a good many figures in it. Suppose we were to say five hundred guineas?'

The earl nodded a gracious acquiescence.

'But perhaps,' Colin went on timidly, 'I may have asked too much in my inexperience.'

'Oh, no; not at all too much,' the earl answered, with a munificent and expansive wave of his five big farmer fingers. 'I like to encourage art—and above all art in a West Dorset man.'

'You're very kind,' Colin murmured, rather humbly, feeling as though he had much to be grateful for. 'I shall do my best to execute the group in marble to your satisfaction, so that it may be worthy of its place in the oriels at Netherton.'

'I've no doubt you will,' the earl put in with noble condescension: 'no doubt at all in the world about it. I'm glad to have the opportunity of extending my patronage to a Wootton sculptor. I'm devoted to art, Mr. Churchill, quite devoted to it.'

Colin smiled, but answered nothing.

The earl stopped a little longer, inspecting the drawings and models, and then took his departure with much stately graciousness, to Colin's intense relief and satisfaction. As he went out, the door happened to open again, and in walked Hiram Winthrop.

'My dear Winthrop!' Colin cried out in

exultation, 'congratulate me! I've just got a commission for Autumn and the Breezes!'

'What, in marble?' Hiram said, grasping his hand warmly.

'Yes, in marble.'

'My dear fellow, I'm delighted. And you deserve it, too, so well. But who from? Not that fat old gentleman with the vacant face that I met just now out there upon the doorstep!'

'The same, I assure you. Our great Dorsetshire magnate, the Earl of Beaminster!'

Hiram's face fell a little. 'The Earl of Beaminster!' he echoed with a voice of considerable disappointment. 'You don't mean to say an earl only looks like that! and dresses like that, too! Why, one would hardly know him from a successful dry-goods man!—Besides,' he thought to himself silently, '*she* must have sent him. He's her cousin.'

Colin had no idea what manner of thing a

dry-goods man might be, but he recognised that it probably stood for some very prosaic and everyday employment. 'Yes,' he said, half laughing, 'that's an earl; and as you say, my dear fellow, he hardly differs visibly to the naked eye from you and me poor common mortals.'

'But, I say, Churchill,' Hiram put in with American practicality, 'what are you going to let this Beaminster person have the group for?'

'Well, I didn't know exactly what to charge him for it, never having sold a work on my own account before; but I said at a venture, five hundred guineas. I should think that wasn't bad, you know, for a first commission.'

Hiram raised his eyebrows ominously. 'Five hundred guineas, Churchill,' he muttered with obvious mistrust; 'five hundred guineas! Why, my dear fellow, have you

asked yet what would be the cost even of the block of marble?’

‘The block of marble!’ Colin repeated, blankly. ‘The cost of the marble! Why, upon my soul, Winthrop, I never took that at all into consideration.’

‘Let’s go round to Maragliano’s at once,’ Hiram suggested, in some alarm, ‘and ask him what he thinks of your bargain. I’m awfully afraid, do you know, Churchill, that you’ve put your foot in it.’

When the great sculptor heard that Colin had really got a commission for his beautiful group, he was at first extremely jubilant, clapping his hands, laughing, and crying out eagerly many times over, ‘Am I a prophet, then?’ with Italian demonstrativeness. But as soon as Colin went on to say that he had promised to execute the thing in marble for 12,500 lire, Maragliano ceased from his capering immediately, and assumed an expression

of the most profound and serious astonishment. 'Twelve thousand lire!' he cried in horror, lifting up both his hands with a deprecatory gesture; 'twelve thousand lire! Why, my dear friend, the marble alone will cost you nearly that, without counting anything for your own time and trouble, or the workmen's wages. A splendid stroke of business, indeed! If I were you, I'd go and ask the Count of Beaminster at once to let me off the bargain.'

Colin's disappointment was, indeed, a bitter one; but he had too keen a sense both of commercial honour and of personal dignity to think of begging off a bargain once completed. 'Oh, no,' he said, 'that would never do, master. I shall execute the commission at the price I named, even if I'm actually out of pocket by it. At any rate, it'll be a good advertisement for me. But, after all, I'm really sorry I ever said I'd let him have

it! Just think, Winthrop, of my spending so much loving, patient care upon every twist and fold of the robes of those delightful Breezes, and then having to sell them in the end to a monster of a creature who wanted me to replace the Autumn by a bronze dial. It's really too distressing!

'Ah, my friend,' Maragliano said sympathetically, 'that is the Nemesis of art, and you'll have to get accustomed to it from the beginning. It is the price we pay for the nature of our clientèle. We get well paid, because we have to work chiefly for the very wealthy. But after we have worked up some statue or picture till every line and curve of it exactly satisfies our own critical taste, we have to sell it perhaps to some vulgar rich man, who buries it in his own drawing-room in New York or Manchester. The man of letters gets comparatively little, because no rich man can buy his work out.

right, and keep it for his own personal glorification; but in return, he feels pretty sure that those whose opinion he most wishes to conciliate, those for whose appreciative taste he has polished and repolished his rough diamond, will in the end see and admire the work he has so carefully and lovingly performed for them. We are less lucky in that respect; we have to cast our pearls before swine too often, and all for the sake of filthy lucre.'

As it turned out, however, the group of Autumn and the Breezes, in spite of this unpromising beginning, really formed the foundation of all Colin Churchill's future fortunes. Colin worked away at it with a will, nothing daunted by the discovery that it would probably cost him something more than he got for it; and in due time he despatched it to the earl in England, at a loss to himself of a little over twenty guineas. Still, the

earl, being a fussy, consequential man, sent more than one friend during the progress of the work to see the group that Churchill was making for him. 'One of my own people, you know—a poor boy off my Dorsetshire estate—conceited I'm afraid, but not without talent; and I've taken it into my head to patronise him, just for the sake of the old feudal connection and all that sort of thing.' Some of the friends were better judges of sculpture than the earl himself, and when the Autumn was nearly finished, Colin was pleased to find that that distinguished connoisseur, Sir Leonard Hawkins, was much delighted with its execution. Next time Sir Leonard came he looked over Colin's designs carefully, and was greatly struck with the sketch for the Clytemnestra. He asked the price, and Colin, wise by experience, stipulated for time to consult Maragliano. When he had done so, he said 700*l.*; and this time

he made for himself a clear 250*l.* That was a big sum for a man in Colin Churchill's position; but it was only the beginning of a great artist's successful career. Commissions began to pour in upon him freely; and before Gwen Howard-Russell returned to Rome, Colin was already making far more money than in his wildest anticipation he had ever dreamt of. He must save up, now, to repay Sam; and when Sam's debt was fairly cancelled, then he must save up again for little Minna.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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